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Against Methodism

37
Henry James Marshall

December 6th 1843.



F I F T E E N
S E R M O N S

Preach'd before the
UNIVERSITY of OXFORD,

On the following Subjects :

The Existence of God.

His Spirituality.

His Omnipresence.

His Omniscience.

His Justice.

His Goodness.

*The Excellency of the Chri-
stian Religion.*

Of Stedfastness in Religion.

1. *The Example of Christ.*

2. *The Example of Christ.*

*His Meekness and Humi-
lity.*

*The Sin of being asham'd of
Christ.*

The Sin of rash Anger.

On St. Thomas.

The Christians Resolution.

By JOHN WILDER M.A. Rector of St. Aldate's
Oxon, late Fellow of Pembroke College.

O X F O R D,

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and are to be had of him on the Payment
of Five Shillings, of whom also may be had
some few of the First Volume at Five Shil-
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Imprimatur,

GUALT. HODGES

Vice-Canc. *Oxon.*

Mar. 9.

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ERRATA.

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To the Right Honourable

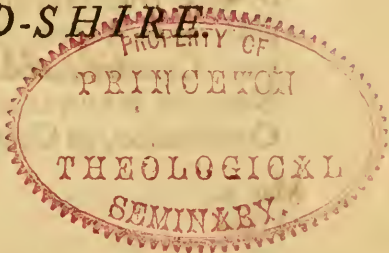
MONTAGUE

EARL of *ABINGDON*

AND

Baron NORRIS of *RYCOT*

in *OXFORD-SHIRE*.



My LORD,

BY dedicating this Volume of Sermons to You, I do great Honour to myself, and your great Condescension in granting me your Patronage will engage all those, who are true Lovers of Vertue and Honour to read over these Discourses without Prejudice, and to practise the Duties therein described, which are so powerfully recommended by your Lordship's eminent Example.

Your Descent from a generous Race of Worthy, Loyal, and Noble Ancestors, challenges our Esteem; but, what raises our Veneration, You have adorned your high Rank

The DEDICATION.

and *Quality*, by untainted *Vertue*, and a firm *Adherence* to the Religion of *Christ*.

As it hath been your Lordship's constant Opinion, that the Profession and Practice of a Christian is most consistent (whatever some may think) with the Politeness and Greatness of a Nobleman; so You have in every Station and Office of Life, conducted yourself by such true Principles of Honour, as have justly gained You the Love and Esteem of your Country, and rendred the illustrious Name of BERTIE dear to all, to whom our Constitution, in Church and State, is dear.

I am your Lordship's

March 10. 1741.

Oxon.

most humble, obedient,

and obliged Servant,

JOHN WILDER.

*Of the Existence and Nature of
God.*

S E R M O N I.

H E B. IX. 41.

*He that cometh to God must believe
that He is, and that He is a Re-
warder of all them that diligently
seek him.*

THE Belief a God is the sole Foun-
dation of all Religion, and the
strongest Obligation to the Practice
of all Vertues, which relate either
to a private or social Life; either this, or
that which is to come.

Human Laws, without the Belief of a God,
are but faint Encouragements to Vertue and
Goodness; and weak Fences against Immo-
rality and Profaneness: For what will all
their promised Rewards, or threatned Punish-
ments

ments avail, to the Support of the One, or Discountenancing of the Other, when the furious Lusts and Passions of Men, who are, or do but think themselves, sure of Secresy, and therefore of Impunity, shall hurry them on to the Commission of Evil?

But where the Belief of an Omniscient, Almighty, and just God prevails, (as it doth wherever good Sense, or right Reason maintains its Empire) it immediately affects and alarms all the Faculties of the Soul, and inclines it, from Motives infinitely more powerful, to the Pursuit of Virtue, and Abhorrence of Vice, than it is possible for human Policy, or any finite Wisdom, upon its own Strength, to contrive or urge: for what can excite our Desire, inflame our Love, and animate our Hopes of the highest Degrees of the most exalted Vertue, if the endless Joys, and unspeakable *Pleasures which are at God's right Hand for evermore*, and with which he hath promised to reward and crown our Christian *Labours*, be insufficient to move, and stir us up to the Attainment of it? or what can effectually discourage or prevent the indulging ourselves in Sin, the Commission of which may here perhaps through Privacy, Riches, or Greatness escape unpunished, if the *Terrors of God's wrath*, and the *Storms of his Vengeance*, denounced against it, will not be able to deterr us from it.

If then the Belief of a God be an Article so necessary, that without it, no vertue, no Religion can subsist: we must, if we have any Regard to our present or future Happiness; any Love for Vertue and Truth, not only believe that there is a God, but also that *He will honour Those, that honour Him,* and make those Partakers of his Glory, who shall endeavour to resemble him *in Righteousness and true Holiness: for He that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a Rewarder of them that diligently seek him.* In speaking to which Words I shall endeavour,

- I. *First*, to prove the Existence of God, that we may be induced *to believe that He is.*
- II. *Secondly*, to describe his Nature, that we may be induced to love and obey him.
- III. *Thirdly*, to shew that the true Foundation of religious Worship is a firm Belief not only that *God is*, but also that *He is a Rewarder of all them, that diligently seek him,* and
- IV. *Lastly*, conclude with some few Reflections relating to our Faith and Practice.

First then I am to prove the Existence of God, that we may be induced *to believe that He is.*

The Name of God is attributed to *many**, but that there is one who by way of Excellency and Eminency, who above all others bears that sacred Name, and therefore is stiled *the most high God*, and *God over or above all*, is a Truth confirm'd by such Reasons, so clear and cogent, as are sufficient to convince, and satisfy every unprejudiced Man, unless he be resolved to *shut his Eyes against their Light*.

For *first*, that there is a God, we thus argue, that there are some Things which began to be, is obvious to our Sense and Experience; and that those Things could not be the Cause of their own Existence, is no less obvious to our Reason; for nothing can be the efficient cause of itself; for if it could, it would then be possible for the same Thing to be, and not to be, at the same Time; it would be, because it produceth itself, and it would not be, because not yet produced: But this being absurd, it is necessary that those Things which are made, must be made by Something else; and that something by some other Being; till at length we arrive at some first Cause, which had no Beginning, which we express by the awful Name of God.

Or else we must either admit of a continual Circle of Causes and effects, but this Supposition is inconsistent and ridiculous; for

* 1 Cor. 8.

thence it would follow that the Cause must produce its Effect, and the Effect its Cause: and consequently that the same Thing must be prior and posterior to itself.

Or else we must grant a Progression of Efficient Causes to all Infinity; and consequently as there is by this Supposition no first Cause, no Beginning; so neither will there be by any last Effect, any Ending. And yet since all material Beings (of which they who maintain this idle Opinion, if any such Fools there be, say the Universe doth consist) are composed of corruptible Principles, or such as may be separated from each other, every individual must consist of corruptible Principles, and consequently the whole World, which consists of Individuals, could never have hitherto subsisted, but must have been long since, innumerable Ages past, dissolved.

Wherefore it is much more consonant to Reason to acknowledge some first Cause, who by his infinite Power and Wisdom created the Universe; and by the same Power and Wisdom continually sustains and preserves it; and consequently we must own and confess the Existence of God.

Secondly, The excellent Form and Figure of Things natural, whether we consider their innate Elegancy and Beauty, or the regular Habitude and respect which they mutually bear to each other, demonstrate the Existence
of

of God. For as the Roman Orator saith, the Beauty of the World, and the Regularity and Order of the heavenly Bodies, force us to acknowledge and confess that there is some Excellent and Eternal, some Stupendous and Adorable Nature, the first Cause, and Mover of all Things: according to what the Psalmist had said long before, *The Heavens declare the Glory of God, and the Firmament sheweth his handy work* *.

For who can look up to, and survey the immense Length and Breadth, the amazing Extent and Expanse of the Heavens, beautifully garnished and magnificently adorned with a graceful variety of Stars, but must see and acknowledge them to be so many Marks of the most consummate Perfection, and evident Testimonies of the glorious Majesty of him that made them?

For as their radiant Brightness dazzles our Eyes; so do their awful Beauty; their prodigious Magnitude: their constant and Harmonious Order; their certain Courses and Revolutions; and their useful and benign Influences to all Nature in her Operations, affect our Minds with pleasing Wonder and Amazement.

And if we consider that these heavenly Bodies, for a long series of some Thousand Years, have neither changed their Courses,

* Psalm. 19.

nor Appearances; nor have suffered with respect to their Bulk, Figure, Scituation and Distance, so far as we can discern, any considerable Variation or Change, we cannot but believe, that there is, and must be, some infinite Being, by whose Power and Wisdom, they are governed and sustained.

We cannot *but be persuaded that at his Pleasure*, as Job expresses it, *He bindeth or looseth the sweet Influences of the Pleiades, and the Bonds of Orion; that He bringeth forth Mazzaroth in his Season, & guideth Arcturus with his Sons: that He knoweth the Ordinances of Heaven, & setteth the Dominion thereof upon the Earth**.

And if we descend from Things heavenly, to Things terrestrial, we shall find the beautiful Traces and Signs of an All Powerful and Intelligent Being no less evident: For doth not every Flower, Herb, Plant, and Tree of the Field proclaim this Truth? For if we consider the Number, Figure, Order, Texture, and Disposition of all their Parts, we shall perceive that they are most wonderfully made, and most excellently contrived either for their own beautiful Proportion, the Preservation of themselves, or the Propagation of their Kind.

For are not their several Roots curiously fashioned and adapted to attract, receive,

* Job 38. 31, &c.

and convey the Juices of the Earth for their Nourishment? Are not their Stalks, their Trunks or Bodies, covered with a proper Rind or Bark as may best defend them from the fatal Extremities of Heat and Cold? And do they not produce, at convenient Seasons, such lively Principles or Seeds, by which the same Kinds of Flowers, Herbs, and Plants, are raised, and propagated?

And if we pass from the vegetable to the animal Species, we shall find the Fabrick of each Individual most curious and delicate in the whole, and in all its parts distinctly considered, and their great variety and use no less wonderful. For every animal both outwardly and inwardly is so form'd, in regard to the compleatness of each in its Kind, their Distinction and Difference from each other, and the Frame and Fitness of the Body and Parts of each, for the several respective Places, whether Air, Earth, or Water, they are appointed to live in, as cannot but raise our Admiration of his Power, Wisdom, and Goodness, who so marvellously contrived and fashioned them.

And what further confirms this Truth, every Vessel, or Part within the animal Body, is so made and placed that nothing seems superfluous, nothing but what is necessary for the Preservation, and Benefit of Life. And shall we think, or assert, that all these
Things

Things were thus contrived and form'd by any Subtlety or Power of lumpish Matter, which is in itself indifferent either to Motion or Rest? in itself immoveable when once fixed; and utterly incapable of moving out of its Place, unless moved by some other Being endued with a motive Principle?

And if it were endued therewith, is it anywise credible, that the beautiful Order and Elegancy visible in Things natural, should be thereby produced? And yet is it not much less credible, that it should give Life, Sense, and Reason, to some of them, since in itself it has neither Life, nor Sense, nor Reason?

But if these Things could not have been effected by Matter with or without Motion; might they not have been the Effects of Chance? No, by no means, for can any One be so senseless as to believe that Things so accurate could have been the Effects of Chance? For if Things heretofore so admirably formed, and some of them endued with Life, Sense, and Reason, were the Products of Chance, whence is it that Chance does not still continue to produce the same, or such like wonderfull Effects? Whence is it that blind Chance, for so many Ages past has been idle or impotent? has it not the same Instruments, and the same Materials to work upon as it once or ever had? or has it less Power now, than heretofore?

Doubtless the Case is the same, but the Truth of it is, as Chance never does, nor ever did, so neither will or can it ever produce such wonderful Effects. Wherefore Things which are made in Number, Weight, and Measure, can never be attributed to such a blind Agent, as Chance. For we have much more Reason to believe that the most beautiful City was built by a casual Concourse of Timber and Stones; or the most elegant Poem was composed by hussling together the Letters of the Alphabet, than that the Works of Nature were formed out of a fortuitous Combination of Atoms, because the most exquisite Products of Art are vastly rude and unpolished, when compared to the Works of Nature.

But if it be incredible that these Things were made by Chance: May not a necessary Causality be assigned as the Cause thereof? No; for this is not to change the Thing, but the Name only: because a necessarily Causality, without Wisdom or Reason, such as is here supposed, is but another Word for Chance: and therefore each of them signifies no more than a casual Determination of Causes, without any Regard to Measure or Design: and consequently to ascribe the Fabrick of this World, wherein so many evident Marks of Wisdom and Power appear, to such a blind and senseless Agent, is a Position

tion that deserves rather to be laugh'd at, and held in derision, than seriously refuted by Reason.

Thirdly, The Existence of God may be proved from the universal Consent of Mankind: For that Men do generally believe that there is a God, and have done so in all Ages, we are assured of by the Records of Times past, and the present Experience of the World. Now, if there was no such a Being as God, how came the Belief of his Existence to have gain'd so universal a Possession of the Mind of Man, and to have found such general Entertainment in all Nations, not only the most civilized and polite, but also the most ignorant and barbarous? Were there no God, whence is it that we are so perpetually encountred with the Thoughts of a Deity? and attended with them, wherever we go? If this Belief of a God be not natural to the Mind of Man, but proceeds from some accidental Distemper of our Understandings, how comes it to be so Epidemical, that no Differences of Age, or Temper, of Education or Climate can wear it out? and set any considerable Part of Mankind free from it? Nay, I may say, set any Person of Sense or Reason free from it? For tho' the Number of practical Atheists, of such as *live without God in the World*, is shamefully great, to the Reproach of Mankind, yet I

dare say there never was, nor can be, any speculative Atheist of tolerable Parts and Understanding to be found: because the Soul of Man hath the Notion of God, born as it were with, and stamp'd upon it; or which is all one, is of such a Nature that in the free use and exercise of its Reason it will find out God; and that he is not hard to be found we learn from these Words of the Apostle, *God is not far from every one of us; and from our own Conscience*, which whether it be good or bad, attests his Existence. Which is a

Fourth Argument to prove the same Truth. For while our Actions are govern'd by the Light of Reason, or of God's Word, our Conscience applauds our Conduct, and fills our Hearts with Joy: But if we act knowingly and wilfully against the Light of Reason, or of God's Word, our Conscience will be sure to write bitter things against us; and torment us with great Horror and Remorse:

Now whence can arise this inexpressible Peace and Pleasure to the innocent and just Man, but from a natural Sense of an Almighty Judge, whom tho' He cannot discern by his bodily Eye, yet with the Eye of his Mind, he perceives and feels him approving and commending the sincerity and uprightness of his Soul? And on the other hand, whence proceed those amazing Agonies of Conscience upon the Commission of some heinous Sin, which

which are insupportable, (*for a wounded Conscience who can bear?*) but from a quick and lively Sense of the same Holy and Almighty Judge, whose Wrath and Vengeance hanging over our guilty Heads strike us with such Terror and Confusion as cannot be express'd.

Whence is it that the most potent as well as weak Transgressor, tho' no one beside himself is conscious of his Sin, through the Force of Conscience, like profane *Belsazzar*, hath his Countenance changed, his Thoughts troubling him, so that the Joints of his Loins are loosed, and his Knees smite one against another?

This perhaps some may impute to groundless and imaginary Fears, but if these are groundless and vain, how come they to take such strong hold of the Sinner, as not to be shaken off, nor removed? For tho' we suppose him to have committed his Sin in secret, having no other Witness of his Actions, than his own guilty Soul; and therefore he can have no Fear of human Vengeance; and yet he grows pale, he shakes, and trembles: is he afraid of himself? surely he loves himself too well to be his own Tormentor: is he afraid of other Men? no, for they know not the troubled Thoughts of his guilty Heart: what then is he afraid of? why, of that eternal Judge, who *searcheth and trieth the Hearts and Reins*, who *seeth in secret*, and will without Repentance *chastise him openly*.

Hence

Hence it appears that the Existence of God must either be granted from the Light of Reason, or the Belief of it will be extorted by the Force of Conscience. Whoever therefore dishonours God by denying his Being, may assure himself that his Denial of him, neither is, nor can be the Result of his Reason, but of his own Wickedness; because since it is the Interest of all wicked Men, it must needs be their Wish, that there should be none.

These Arguments which have been produced, I hope are sufficient to convince any reasonable Man of the Existence of God: they are indeed obvious and common but not therefore to be despised: for if so, the Warmth and Light of the Sun which evidently demonstrate the Existence and Nature of that heavenly Body, might be rejected as a trifling Proof.

Whence we may infer that there is no occasion for that Argument *à Priori*, so much boasted of, of late, because it looks much more like a whimsical Novelty, the issue of Imagination, and Self-conceit, than a solid Proof of the Existence of a Deity: because all Arguments of that Kind must proceed from a real Cause to demonstrate the Effect; so that unless we can suppose that he that made all Things, was himself made by some Cause, or that there is something by Nature ante-

antecedent to that infinite Being, which of all Beings is absolutely the first: to alledge an Argument à priori for the Existence of God, will certainly shew our own Weakness, and sooner subvert, than establish the Truth of the Conclusion.

Having proved the Existence of God that we may be induced to believe that He is, I proceed now

Secondly, to describe his Nature, that we may be induced to love and obey him. To pretend indeed to form any Idea of God worthy of his glorious Majesty, would be the Height of Vanity and Presumption, justly deserving Zophar's Censure and Reproof of Job, *Canst thou by searching find out God? canst thou find out the Almighty to Perfection? it is as high as Heaven, what canst thou do? deeper than Hell, what canst thou know? the Measure thereof is longer than the Earth, and broader than the Sea**. But tho' we cannot search out and comprehend him as He is, yet our Reason strengthened and enlightned by the Word of God, can trace out and discover some Rays of his essential Glory: and be able tho' not to define, yet faintly to describe and express some of the Properties and Attributes of his Nature, some of which are summ'd up in the first Article of our Church, (*viz.*) *There is*

* Job ch 11.

one living and true God, Eternal, Incorporeal, without Parts, and Passions, of infinite Power, Wisdom, and Goodness, the Maker and Preserver of all Things.

That there is a God hath been already proved, and that there is but one is a necessary Consequence from the infinite Plenitude of his Nature; for since God is a Being infinitely perfect, He must have all possible Perfection, and consequently there can be no more Gods than one, because if there were, each of them would, and would not have all possible Perfection: each would have all Perfection, because by the Supposition, each of them is properly God; and each of them, would not have all, because each could not have what the other had.

He is called the living and true God, not only because it would be absurd to ascribe the Formation and Preservation of all Things to an inanimate Deity; but also because our God is emphatically stiled *the living God*, to distinguish him from Idols and false Gods; thus saith the Psalmist. *their Idols are Silver and Gold, the work of Men's hands; they that make them are like unto them, and so is every one that trusteth in them; but our God is the living God: He is our Help, and our Shield**. And thus saith Jeremiah, *Our Lord is the true God, He is the living God, and an ever-*

* Psal. 115.

lasting King, at whose wrath the Earth shall tremble *.

And this living God must be Eternal, because, (as hath been proved) He is the first Cause of all Things, and therefore it is impossible that He should arise from Nothing, or from some antecedent Cause: and consequently He must be necessarily of himself, and what is so of itself, must have been for ever, and can never cease to be: according to the Description which God gives of himself. *I am Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End, the First and the last* †.

And this eternal Being must be incorporeal, that is a Spirit, according to our Saviour's Assertion, *God is a Spirit* *. For a Spirit being allow'd to be more excellent than Matter, if God were a corporeal Being, He would be inferior to some of his Creatures, (viz.) to Angels and the Souls of Men, because they are Spirits. Besides this, since God is the first Cause and Mover of all Things, if He were corporeal, He himself would be incapable of giving Motion, because Matter as such is incapable of Motion, unless moved by something else endued with the Power thereof.

It hence follows that God must be without Parts, because what hath parts properly so called is extended, and consequently corpo-

* Chap. 10. 10

† Revel. 22. 13

* John 4.

real; but this is utterly inconsistent with God's Omnipresence, because no corporeal Being can exist in the same Place, at the same Time, where other corporeal Beings are.

And as God is without Parts, so is He without Passions. For tho' Anger, Grief, Mercy &c. are in Scripture attributed to him, yet they are not properly Affections inherent in God, like the Passions inherent in us Men. Because all Passions denote a Want or Absence of some Good, or a Complacency upon the Fruition of it when acquir'd; Uneasiness for the Loss of it, or pleasure for the avoiding some Evil which might have been hurtful to us; and therefore they imply some Imperfection; and consequently are unworthy of, and far to be removed from, that Being which is absolutely perfect: Besides this, all Passions arise from some superior Power, and therefore if God could admit of Passions, there would be some Power superior to Omnipotence.

His Goodness, Wisdom and Power are displayed in the Formation and Preservation of all Things, and are conspicuous in the Order, Beauty, and use of the Creatures in general; and more especially in the various Operations of his Providence; but above all in the wise and gracious Oeconomy of our Redemption.

And finally that the whole World was the
Work

Work of his Hands, and not eternal, is prov'd from the late Invention of Arts and Sciences; from the Discovery of Countrys some of them even yet unpeopled and uncultivated; and from the Attestation of the most antient Histories; because they give us no farther Account backwards, than a few thousand Years that are past. Whence we infer that the World was made, by some all-wise and powerful Being, (viz.) the great God whom we adore.

The preceding Description of the Divine Nature may be confirmed by these Words of the Psalmist, *Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised, and his Greatness is unsearchable**: which is yet more fully express'd by the Son of Sirach, *We may speak of God much, and yet come short; Wherefore He is all. How shall we be able to magnifie him? For He is great above all his Works. The Lord is terrible and very great, and marvellous in his Power. When you glorify the Lord, exalt him as much as you can, for even yet will He far exceed. And when you exalt him, put forth all your Strength, and be not weary, for you can never go far enough. Who hath seen him that He might tell us? and who can magnifie him as He is? there are yet hid greater Things than these be, for we have seen but a few of his Works †.*

* Psal, 145. 3. † Ch. 43. 27, &c.

If then the Divine Nature is so great and glorious, far above all that we can conceive or express; if He is the inexhaustible Centre and Foundation of all that is beautiful and good, from whence all our Joys, and all our Blessings are continually derived, we cannot but be induced to love and obey him: for if we love ourselves, if we desire to be happy, we must love him, because He alone is worthy of all our Love, He alone can make us happy.

How wretchedly then are we mistaken in our Pursuit of Happiness! when *we set our Affections on Things below, and not on Things above.* When we place them on the uncertain Honours, the momentary Pleasures, and deceitful Riches of this World; *the Love of which is Enmity against God:* when we catch at Shadows, and lose the Substance; when we fondly adore the Beauty and Splendor of some created Beings, which are but reflected Rays of the Wisdom and Brightness of the Creator.

Wherefore let the Love of ourselves, and the Love of the World die in us: but let the Love of God revive, and live in us; let it begin here, if we hope to have it perfected for ever hereafter.

If the Love of God lives, and dwells in our Hearts, we neither shall nor can admit of any Rival to him in our Affections, but
shall

shall be able with the Psalmist to say, *like as the Hart desireth the Water-brooks, so longeth my Soul after Thee, O God: my Soul is a-thirst for God, yea, even for the living God* *. For whom have I in Heaven but Thee? and there is nothing upon Earth that I desire in comparison of Thee †. And if our Love of God be thus warm and fervent, we shall eagerly desire to be united with him; and detest and avoid all those Things that may obstruct our Union and Communion with him: and consequently a sincere and constant Obedience will be the Fruit of our Love; for if we love God, we shall keep his Commandments *: and in keeping of them there is great Reward †.

Which leads me to my *Third Particular*, which is to shew that the true Foundation of all religious Worship is a firm Belief, *that God is a Rewarder of all them that diligently seek him.*

That the Belief of a God is the true Foundation of all religious Worship, is evident, because our Hopes and Fears, which are the great Principles of Action in us, are most powerfully affected and strongly influenced, by the Sanction of Rewards and Punishments: and in Proportion to the Certainty and Greatness of each of them, we shall be animated to keep the Commands of God,

* Psal. 42. 1. † Ps. 73. 25. * Joh. 14. 21. † Ps. 19. 11.

that we may engage the Love, and be deterred from breaking Them, that we may escape the Displeasure of the supream Legislator and Judge of the World. And that the promised Rewards are not mean and mercenary Motives to Obedience, as some may impiously suggest, but such as are no less worthy of us to be influenced thereby, than worthy of God who hath proposed them to us; is evident, because He hath appointed them; and because they are Incitements to us only to act suitably to our Reason, and to the holy Will of God, by which we please him, and repair and adorn the Image of God, defaced by Sin, with Righteousness and true Holiness after which we were created.

'Tis then only that Rewards become mean and mercenary, when they are given and received, as Inducements, to desert or betray the Cause of Vertue, and to give into all the filthiness of Wickedness and Vice.

But how do we know that God will be a *Rewarder of all them that diligently seek him?* Why, this is a comfortable Truth, which we Christians are infallibly assured of, by the Word of that God, *who cannot lie*. For therein we read, *that Life and Immortality is brought to light by the Gospel; that God is not unrighteous to forget our Work, and labour of Love; but that He will make us Partakers of the Inheritance of the Saints in Light.*

But

But what is required on our Part to qualify us for this *Inheritance, incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved for us in Heaven**? Why, Faith and Obedience, *a lively Faith in Christ, which works by Love* †: and a sincere, constant, and universal, instead of perfect, Obedience; for this is not to be attained, whatever our modern Enthusiasts may say and pretend to, till we arrive at that happy Place, where *the Souls of just Men are made perfect*.

But to this Reward express'd sometimes by *a Crown of Life, and a Crown of Glory*, we can by no means lay Claim to, on account of any intrinsick Merit of our own Righteousness; because our Righteousness is of no more Worth, as the Prophet expresses it, *than a filthy Rag*, and *when we have done all, our Saviour bids us say, we are unprofitable Servants*: and consequently there can be no manner of Proportion between the best of our Works, and the glorious Reward which God will give us, and therefore we can have no Right or Title to it, but in and through the Promise of God, made to us through *his rich Mercy*, for the Sake and Merits of Christ, who by his Blood hath purchas'd and sealed to us eternal Redemption.

Hence the Scripture, which absolutely excludes all Merit in us sinful Creatures, stiles

* 1 Pet. 1. 4. † Gal. 5. 6.

eternal Life, which is the promised Reward of our Obedience, *The Gift of God**, and at the same Time acquaints us, that such is the Demerit of Sin, that the proper *Wages* of it is *Death*.

And the more to encourage our Obedience, and excite us *to have an Eye like Moses to the Recompence of Reward †*: God assures us that we shall obtain it, on this easy Condition, if *we seek it diligently*, viz. if we seek it by praying unto and praising him; by a regular and constant Attendance on his Ordinances, leading our Lives *according to, and persevering in, that holy Vocation, wherewith we are called, unto the End*.

Happy then is the State and Condition of all the adopted Sons of God through Christ. For He hath changed the Throne of God's strict Justice into a Throne of Grace: so that if we have offended him (and who is there that hath not offended him? and doth not some time or other offend him, through the Frailty and Corruption of Nature?) yet if with humble and contrite Hearts, we sue for Mercy, in the Name, and for the Sake of Christ, we shall obtain it, *in our Time of Need*: because in him *we have Redemption through his Blood, the Forgiveness of Sins, according to the Riches of his Grace**.

* Rom. 6. 23.

† Hebr. 11.

* Ephes. 1. 7.

On the other hand, how wretched is the State of Man by Nature, depraved and dark as it is, he has Light enough, from Reason and Conscience to discover the Existence of God, and the Wickedness of his own Heart! he has Light enough, to make him daily sensible, that he is more and more polluted with Sin: and the Horrors of his wounded Spirit will make him sensible, that he must one Day give a severe Account, to that just and holy Being, who is *of purer Eyes than to behold Iniquity*, without Abhorrence and Detestation:

In this sad Condition what shall he do to allay his Fears, and procure Ease and Quiet to his wounded Spirit? Shall he fly to the Philosophers for Aid? Alas! they are in the same Condition, and how should they cure his Evils, who are not able to cure their own? shall he give himself up to an eager Pursuit of the Profits, Pleasures, and Honours of this World? These perhaps instead of alleviating, will only aggravate his Trouble and Anxiety; for tho' a while they may possibly compose, or stupify, the restless Fears, and tormenting Apprehensions of Divine Vengeance, which corrode and distract his guilty Mind; yet the pleasing Dream will soon be ended, and the Poms and Vanities will appear, as they are, but trifling Amusements, and very probably criminal Enjoyments, which how sweet soever they may be in the Fruition, leave behind

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them

them a bitter farewell, with which Conscience, stung and awakned, will be sure *to vex him with all its Storms.*

But if neither the Precepts of the Philosophers, nor the Vanities of the World, can long relieve or allay the Troubles of a wounded Spirit, a Spirit wounded by the poisonous Arrows of Sin; where then shall the Sinner go? or to whom shall he apply himself for Ease and Comfort? shall he flie unto his offended God for Succour, and implore his Aid? This, his own Reason will tell him, is what he ought to do, for none but God is able to relieve him: but such is our miserable State by Nature, that his Reason alone cannot assure him, that the offended Majesty of Heaven will be reconciled to, and forgive him, *tho' he seek it carefully with Tears*: Indeed while he considers the Mercy and Goodness of God, he may flatter himself with the Hopes of Pardon: but when he reflects on his infinite Justice, his Fears of Punishment, according to the Proportion of his Sins, will arise and increase; so that under this great Uncertainty; he finds the Prophet's Assertion, *there is no Peace, saith my God, to the wicked, he is like a troubled Sea*, verified by his own Experience.

I shall conclude, what has been said, with the following Reflections, relating to our Faith and Practice.

If

If we believe that God is, and that he is a Rewarder of all them that diligently seek him, let us then diligently seek him; and we shall never want Support and Comfort, under the various Conditions and Circumstances of Life: for are we in Prosperity, we know then to whom we are obliged, and ought to return our Thanks? and if we are in Distress, we are assured that God is our present Help in Trouble: so that we need not fear, tho' the Earth itself be moved, and the Hills be carried into the midst of the Sea; tho' the Waters thereof rage and swell, and the Mountains shake at the Tempest of the same *, because we know that at God's Command, the tottering Foundations of the one are fixed, and the roaring Noise of the other is stilled: and much less need we fear what Man can do unto us, who is but a Shadow, a thing of Nought; for surely our Almighty Friend can stop the Overflowing of Ungodliness, as well as the proud Waves of the Sea, with hitherto shalt thou come, but no farther.

Since there is an All-powerful God, who doeth in Heaven, and Earth, whatsoever pleaseth him, let an awful Sense of his Majesty, in whose Sight even the Angels themselves are not pure, mortify all Pride, and self-conceit, in our Hearts: for what is Man at best but sinful

* Psal. 46. 1, 2, 3.

Dust and Ashes: *who walketh in a vain Shadow, and disquieteth himself in vain; whose Breath is in his Nostrils, and wherein is he to be accounted of?*

Since we are assured that there is a God, and that *He is a Rewarder*, through the Merits of Christ, *of all them that diligently seek him*: Let us then believe in God, and let us believe in our Lord Jesus Christ: for 'tis not sufficient to believe in one, without we also believe in the other: For thus saith our Lord to his Disciples, *let not your Heart be troubled, ye believe in God, believe also in me* *.

But if we are such *Fools as to say in our Hearts, there is no God*; if we are such Madmen, as contrary to all Sense and Reason, and the universal Voice of Mankind, to deny his Being; if we are such ingrateful Unbelievers, as *to deny and speak evil of the Dignity of the Lord that bought us*; through whom our God, *who is a consuming Fire* † to incorrigible Offenders, is become a God of Mercy and Love to all penitent Sinners, we shall deprive ourselves of all the sweetest Comforts of this Life, and the joyous Expectations of a better.

If there be a God, *the Rewarder of them that diligently seek him*, and an Avenger of all that oppose his Will; shall we not then, with all readiness, submit to his Dominion,

* John 14. 1. † Hebr. 12. 29.

now given to Christ, who gave himself for us? For if God's Goodness, promised through Christ, will not incline us to pay that Homage and Obedience that are due to him; let the Terrors of his Majesty perswade and inforce us to it: For we may assure ourselves, that his fiery indignation will wax the more hot against us, in Proportion to our ungrateful Contempt *of the Riches of his Love.*

Let us unfeignedly thank God for *the Mystery hid for Ages*, viz. the Incarnation of his eternal Son, *God blessed for ever*: Let us believe the true natural Divinity of our Lord, as clearly asserted in Scripture, as any other Article of Faith: for upon this Faith alone depend our Assurance of God's present Reconciliation with us, and all our Expectations of his future Favour.

Let us believe this fundamental Article of our Religion, inspite of all the false Comments of critical Unbelievers, how much soever they may be otherwise renowned for their Parts and Learning. For tis not their bold Comments, which pervert the Word of God, that can give us Ease now, or Comfort in our dying Moments. No, it is only a lively Faith in God, through Christ, that *God incarnate*, can give us Satisfaction about what most of all concerns us, the Forgiveness of our Sins, and a pleasing Hope of a blissful Immortality.

For

For it is through this Faith alone, that we have a strong Consolation, who have fled for Refuge to lay hold of the Hope that is set before us: which Hope we have as an Anchor of the Soul, both sure and stedfast; and which entreth into that within the Vail; whither the Fore-runner is for us entred, even Jesus, made an High-Priest for ever after the Order of Melchizedech*.

* Hebr. 6. 18, &c.

The Spirituality of God.

S E R M O N II.

J O H N IV. 24.

God is a Spirit, and they that worship him, must worship him in Spirit and in Truth.

THESE Words are a part of that Dialogue, which our Lord had with the Woman of Samaria, who applying herself to him, for a Decision of that great Controversy there was, between the Samaritans and the Jews, concerning the true Place, and Way of divine Worship; *Our Fathers*, saith she, *worshipp'd in this Mountain**, to wit, the Mount Gerizim, on which they had built a Temple, in Opposition to the Temple of Jerusalem, which oc-

* Vers. 20.

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caſion'd ſuch an Averſion, between the Jews and Samaritans, that they had *no Dealings with each other*, and ye ſay, that in *Jeruſalem alone is the Place, where Men ought to worſhip*; Jeſus ſaith unto her, *Woman, believe me, the Hour cometh, when ye ſhall neither in this Mountain, nor yet at Jeruſalem worſhip the Father**; nay, *the Hour is coming, and now is, when the true Worſhippers ſhall worſhip the Father in Spirit, and in Truth*, not like you Samaritans, who *worſhip ye know not what †*; without any Rule or Preſcription of God's Word; nor yet as the Jews, who rely on their Sacrifices and ritual Performances, as if they were ſufficient *to purge away their Sins*, and reconcile an offended God.

No, the Time of Reformation is now come, when the Worſhippers of God ſhall approach his Throne, in a much more rational and ſpiritual Way, for *He ſeeketh ſuch to worſhip him*; for *God is a Spirit, and they that worſhip him, muſt worſhip him in Spirit and in Truth*. In ſpeaking to which Words, I ſhall endeavour to ſhew,

- I. *Fiſt*, What we are to underſtand by a Spirit.
- II. *Secondly*, to prove that God is a Spirit.
- III. *Thirdly*, what is meant by worſhipping God in Spirit and in Truth.

§ Verſ. 21. † Verſ. 23.

IV. *Laſt-*

IV. *Lastly*, shall assign some Reasons why spiritual Worship is so acceptable to God, and therefore necessary for us to pay him.

First then I am to shew what we are to understand by a Spirit.

And here, not to trouble you with the various Acceptations of the Word Spirit, used and applied in many other Passages of Scripture, wherein we read that it sometimes signifies, the Breath of a living Creature, thus God threatens *to destroy all Flesh, wherein is the Breath, or Spirit, of Life* *.

Elsewhere it signifies the good or evil Affections of the Mind. Thus, Bezaleel was said *to be of an excellent Spirit*, because above other Men, he was *fill'd with Wisdom, Understanding, and Knowledge* †.

And in other Places it denotes, the Life and Strength, and the Heart of a Man; and also that godlike Principle of Thought and Reason, which the Creator, at Man's Formation infused into him, and which in its Nature bears some faint Resemblance of that infinite Being, who in my Text is stiled a Spirit, which, to pass by all other Significations, properly denotes a most pure, active, and immaterial Substance, void of all Quantity and Extension; of all corporeal Mixture

* Gen. 6. 17. † Exod. 3. 3.

or Composition ; and whose essential Property and Act it is to think ; and consequently it is a Being without Parts, and therefore indivisible ; of a Nature too refined to be seen or touched by us, or to be the Object of any of our Senses ; and therefore not be represented by any sensible Image or Picture whatsoever.

This Notion of a Spirit is agreeable to that negative Description of a Spirit, which our Saviour gave to his Disciples, when they were terrified at his Appearance after his Resurrection, for they *supposed they had seen a Spirit*, for He *said unto them, Why are ye troubled, and why do Thoughts arise in your Hearts? Behold my Hands and my Feet, that it is I myself; handle me, and see; for a Spirit hath not Flesh and Bones, as ye see me have* *.

But tho' we cannot frame, through the Weakness of our Understandings, any Notion of a Spirit, but by such Negatives as these, yet there is no Reason why it should not be attributed to God, because we thereby only remove from him, whatever implies any Imperfection.

And at the same Time we suppose that when it is affirmed of God, as it is in my Text, that it denotes an intelligent immaterial Substance of infinite Perfection.

* Luke 24. 37, &c.

For we must not think with Spinoza, Hobbs, and other Philosophers, falsely so called, who, out of an Atheistical Principle, asserted, that an immaterial Substance was an impossibility, and a contradictory Notion; to wit, for this Reason, because they thought, what was not Matter, was Nothing.

But what could induce them to think so, but because they were unable to form any Idea of an immaterial Substance? But if the Inability to form an Idea of any Thing, be a Proof that it doth not exist, than many Things, which we are sure do exist, for the aforesaid Reason, would not exist.

Thus Light and Colours, which are Realities, would be nothing, because blind Men can frame no Ideas of them, and if the Inability of blind Men to form Ideas of Light and Colours, be no Argument against their Existence; why should the Inability of any Man to form Ideas of immaterial Substances, be an Argument to prove their Impossibility?

And tho' we are no more able to form Ideas of immaterial Substances, than blind Men are to form Ideas of Light and Colours, yet we have this Advantage to prove the Existence of the one, more than blind Men have to prove the Existence of the other, viz. that we can see such Operations and Effects, which we are sure, cannot proceed from Matter, nor from any Combinations of Matter, and there-

fore must proceed from immaterial Substances; whereas blind Men can no more perceive the Effects or Operations of Light and Colours, than they can perceive Light or Colours themselves; and therefore we have Reason to believe the Existence of the one, from our own Observation; whereas blind Men have only the Testimony of other Men, to induce them to believe the Existence of the other.

Having shewn what we are to understand by a Spirit, I proceed now

Secondly, to prove that God is a Spirit; and this will appear from the Light of Nature, as well as Revelation.

That it appears, from the Light of Revelation, is evident from my Text, tho' it is nowhere else expressly asserted, but only consequentially proved from all those Expressions which we meet with, in Scripture, such as are *the Spirit of the Lord*, and *the Spirit of God*, which frequently occur therein.

And that it appears from the Light of Nature, as well as Revelation, will be no less evident, if we consider ourselves, and reflect upon our own Souls, for we may thereby perceive, and be convinced, that in each of us there is a Principle of thought and Reason, most widely distant from, and more noble, than Matter: for as Tully expresses it, *there is Nothing in our Souls, that can seem mixed*

or compounded of Earth, or of the other Elements of Water, Air; or Fire, which hath the Power of Exerting the Act, or Habit, of Memory, Understanding, or Reflection; which can retain Things past, foresee Things future, or apprehend even Things present; for all these Powers are above the Capacity of meer Matter; nor can be any otherwise conceived to be derived or given to Man, but from God, the great *Father of Spirits*, who at Man's Creation, *breathed into his Nostrils the Breath of Life*, or that spiritual Principle the Soul, which being *made after the Image of God*, exerts the Acts of Understanding, and Will, and all other intelligent Powers of Life.

Now this being a Truth allow'd even by those who are Strangers to Christianity, as well as by those who are Professors of it; we must therefore conclude, that the Nature of God must be like unto it; for if the most excellent Part of ourselves, which makes us to be what we are, and which distinguisheth us from the rest of the World, be a spiritual Being; unless we are disposed to think worse of the great Author of our Being, than we do of ourselves, which would be blasphemously absurd, we must think and believe God to be a Spirit; nay, we must acknowledge him, as being the Source of all Things, to be such a Spirit, as is infinitely superior to the Soul, or Spirit of Man.

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This Notion of God, the wiser Heathen were able to form by the Strength of their own Reason; for some of them call him a pure, simple, and impassible Essence, incorporeal, and separated from all Matter: and others of them stile him the *νῦς Κοσμοποιῆς*, the *great Mind*, which form'd the World, according to the Laws of his own unerring Wisdom.

A second Argument to prove that *God is a Spirit*, may be taken from the Inconsistency there is, between a corporeal Substance, and the essential Perfections of the divine Nature.

For to suppose God to be a corporeal Substance, is inconsistent with his absolute Unity and Independency; for since every corporeal Being consists of Parts, which are either of a different Nature, such as are the Parts of Plants, or Trees, or Animals; or of a like Nature, such as are the Parts of Water, Air, or Fire: therefore God, if he were corporeal, would also consist of several Parts of a different or similar Nature, which would be utterly inconsistent with his absolute Unity; because each of those Parts, since God is a Being infinitely perfect, would be an infinite Being, and therefore there would be so many infinite Beings, and consequently so many Gods, as there are Parts; to affirm which is a Contradiction to Reason, for how can there

there be more Beings, than one, that have all Perfection? and to Scripture. For thus saith the *God of Truth, I am the Lord, and there is none else, there is no God besides me* *.

And as the Supposition of a corporeal God is inconsistent with his Unity, so is it also no less inconsistent with his absolute Independency: for the Parts of all corporeal Beings are useful & subservient to each other, and consequently so far dependent upon each other, and therefore must be inconsistent with an absolute Independency.

But farther, if God were not a Spirit, but a corporeal Being, He could neither be infinite, nor omnipresent; not infinite, because a corporeal Being, let it be ever so wide and extensive, must needs have some Shape or Figure; and if so, it must be contain'd within the Limits of that Shape or Figure.

And besides this, there must also be, beyond the Limits of the most extensive Body, some Space, wherein it doth exist: wherefore the most extensive Body cannot be infinite, because what is so can admit of no Bounds, either of Figure or Space: and therefore God cannot be a corporeal Being, for his Essence diffuseth itself in and through all Spaces whatsoever; *the Heaven of Heavens are not able to contain him.*

* Isaiah 45. 5.

And as the Supposition of a corporeal Deity is inconsistent with his Infinity, so is it likewise inconsistent with his Omnipresence; this is a Consequence of the preceding Argument; for if all corporeal Beings are confin'd within some certain Limits and Space, they consequently cannot exceed all Limits, nor fill all Space.

Besides this, it is an allow'd Principle among Philosophers, that two corporeal Beings cannot, at the same Time, be in the same Place; therefore if God be a corporeal Being, he must, at the same Time, be excluded out of those Places, which other Bodies actually possess; and consequently a corporeal God cannot be omnipresent.

Neither can he be infinite in Knowledge and Wisdom, for it is absurd to believe that meer Matter, which hath not so much as the Power of Motion, should yet have a much more excellent Power, viz. that of Thinking and Reasoning, belonging to it.

And since both Reason and Experience assure us, that the Laws of Matter are necessary, having no arbitrary Principle to excite or stop its Motion, if God were a corporeal Being, He would be a necessary Agent, without Freedom or Liberty of Will: for the Solution of which Difficulty, Lucretius's *Clinamen Principiorum* is too trifling, and ridiculous, to require any Confutation.

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And if to suppose God to be a corporeal Being, be inconsistent with Knowledge, and Freedom of Will; how can it be consistent with his Goodness, Mercy, and Love? For he that knows not what he does, nor acts with Freedom of Will, neither is nor can be good, merciful, or loving.

From all which it appears, that to affirm God to be a material Being, is Destructive to all the essential Perfections of his Nature: God therefore cannot be a material, but a far different Kind of Being, to wit, an immaterial or spiritual Substance; wherefore God must be, what I have endeavoured to demonstrate, that He is, and what my Text affirms him to be, viz. *a Spirit*.

But if God be a Spirit, why is He so often represented in Scripture to have the Parts, and Figure, of human Bodies belonging to him? We reply, that these bodily Representations are exhibited to us, in Condescension to the Weakness of our Capacities; and that we are thereby to understand, not that such bodily Parts do really belong to God, but that such Acts of his are thereby signified, as bear some likeness to those which we perform by those Parts.

Thus, by *the Face of God*, and *the Light of his Countenance*, we are to understand the Manifestation of his Favour; by *his Eyes*, his Omniscience, that looks through all Things;

by *his Ears*, his Readiness to hear our Prayers; by *his Mouth*, the Revelation of his Will; by *his Bowels*, the Tenderneſs of his Compaſſion; by *his Heart*, the Sincerity of his Affections; and by *his Hand*, and *Arm*, the invincible Strength of his Power: it being our Duty to form our Conceptions of God, not according to the Letter of ſuch Expreſſions, but according to the true Intent or Meaning of them; becauſe it is the Deſign, and not the Letter, of thoſe Metaphors, that we are chiefly to take Notice of, and attend to.

For if we judge according to the Letter, and not according to the Deſign of them, we ſhould form unworthy Notions of God, and *think wickedly, that He is even ſuch an one as ourſelves*, and conſequently we ſhould be no leſs erroneous and injurious, as to the Nature and Way of that true Worſhip, which is due unto him; and this reminds me of my

Third Particular, which is to ſhew what is meant by *worſhipping God in Spirit and in Truth*.

To make this Point as clear as I can, and free from all Objection, it may not be improper to premiſe, that to worſhip God is an Act of the Underſtanding and Will, and therefore an Act of the Soul of Man, which is a Spirit; and is attended with a decent, and humble Geſture of Body; by which Pro-
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stration both of Soul and Body, we testify and declare, as much as in us lies, our awful and grateful Sense of God's Majesty, and his Goodness towards us, our great Esteem of, and Veneration for, God's unspeakable Perfections, and our most ardent Desire of his Favour and Blessing, and of holding and enjoying Union and Communion with him.

But since we are required by Christ in my Text to *worship God in Spirit and in Truth*; why, or to what Purpose, in the Notion of spiritual Worship, are humble and decent Gestures of the Body inserted; for do not these seem, if not unlawful, yet at least not expedient? Indeed, was there no other Passage in Scripture, beside this of my Text, relating to the Worship of God, one would be induced to think, that bodily Worship was needless, and excluded from the spiritual Worship of God; but since there are many other Passages of Scripture of equal Authority with that in my Text, wherein bodily Worship is enjoined, and also recommended to our Practice, by the Example of the best Saints of God, we are doubtless required *to glorify God in our Body, as well as in our Spirits, because they are God's*.

For this is a Precept delivered by St Paul*, and we find his own Example conformable thereto, for saith he, † *for this Cause*, namely,

* 1 Cor. 6 20.

† Ephes. 3. 14.

that the Ephesians *might be rich and confirm'd, in the Knowledge, and Love, and Grace of Christ, I bowe my Knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ*: who himself likewise a little before his Crucifixion, *kneel'd down, and prayed to his Father, that, if it were possible, that bitter Cup, of Pain, Grief, and Anguish, He was then about to drink of, might pass from him.*

Whence we may justly infer, that God requires of those that worship him, not only the inward Purity, and Affection of the Soul, but also a suitable Gesture of the Body, as an outward Testimony of that Reverence, which is due unto him. Wherefore tho' we are commanded *to worship God in Spirit, and in Truth,* or as the Apostle expresses it, *to serve him with the Spirit of our Mind, which is our holy, reasonable, and acceptable Service,* yet we are not thereby forbidden, but required, by Precept and Example, *to worship, or glorify God, in our Bodies,* as well as in our Souls.

It must indeed be own'd, that God chiefly regards and requires the Purity, Love, and Veneration of our Souls; and that where these are wanting, the most humble Gestures of the Body are odious in his Sight: for to approach his Presence, with our bended Knees, and *draw near to him with our Mouth, and honour him with our Lips, while our Hearts are lifted up with Pride and Vanity,* or as the

Prophet expresseſſes it, *are far from God*, is not to worship, but to affront him; a Piece of Hypocrisy, which Reason, as well as Religion, condemns and detests.

This being premised concerning Worship in General, it will be more easy to shew, what it is *to worship God in Spirit, and in Truth*: or wherein spiritual Worship doth consist. Now, this must be such as proceeds from a spiritual Principle, to wit, the Soul of Man; such as is directed and perfected by the Influence of the Spirit of God; such as is animated by *a lively Faith*; and performed with Joy, Humility, Reverence, Truth, and the utmost Sincerity of Heart, in *the Name of Jesus Christ our Lord*.

It must proceed from a spiritual Principle, and that not only in a Natural, but in a moral and evangelical Sense: for tho' our first Parents, during their State of Innocence, had a sufficient Guide, as well as Strength, by their own Reason, to perform, in a due Manner, this spiritual Worship to Almighty God; yet, by their Fall, having, in a great Measure, extinguish'd the Light of Reason, and put all their Passions, as well as their Will, into a rebellious Tumult and Confusion, they were not only disabled to know and serve God aright, but derived and entailed their own Blindness, Impotence, and Shame, upon all their wretched Posterity;
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of which we can have no greater Proof or stronger Evidence, than what the late Advocates for Reason have alledged, to prove, in its degenerate State, that it is a sufficient Guide in Matters of Religion.

For had not God out of his great Mercy given us, by his Prophets in Times past, a new Transcript of his Will, and in these last Days by his Son, a most perfect Edition of his Law, once lively engraven in our Hearts, we should have been for ever at a Loss, to have known how to worship God *in Spirit, and in Truth.*

This is evident in Fact, for where ever human Reason has been, or is, the sole Guide of Religion, we find that even Religion has there been, and is, a System of Inconsistency, Immorality, and Impiety, which renders its Votaries so much the more ridiculous and culpable, the more they have been devout.

So that by Nature, inspight of our boasted Reason, we should have been utter Strangers to the true Way of God's spiritual Worship, unless we had been regenerated and born again, by Christ, our second Adam, unto spiritual Life: and therefore we have Reason to praise God for *the Riches of his Mercy*, in that, even when *we were dead in Sins, he hath quick'ned us together with Christ*: and by the Light of his Word and Example, hath delivered us from the Bondage of Superstition,
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the Powers of Satan, into the glorious Liberty of the Children of God, that being thus rescued out of the Hands of our Enemies, we may serve him without Fear, in Holiness and Righteousness before him, all the Days of our Life.

And this we are enabled to do through *the Love of God, which by the Holy Ghost, that is given unto us, is shed abroad in our Hearts: For, as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the Sons of God; for we have not received the Spirit of Bondage again to fear, but we have received the Spirit of Adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. And it is this Holy Spirit, that giveth us Access to the Father, that helpeth our Infirmities, that inlightneth our Understanding, and rectifys our Wills; that awakens our Conscience, and subdues our inordinate Passions; that sanctifies our Sorrows, and refines our Joys; that softens our Hearts, and humbles our Spirits: in a Word, that teacheth and assisteth us to pray to, and worship God, as we ought, in Spirit, and in Truth.*

And as spiritual Worship proceeds from a spiritual Principle, so must it be animated with a lively Faith: for he that cometh to God, must believe that He is; and that He is a Rewarder of all those, that diligently seek him.

We must believe that there is a God, otherwise all our Worship of a God will be vain and ridiculous; and we must also believe, that He

He will reward those that diligently seek him: for if He were regardless of his Creatures, and cared not whether we did, or did not, worship him, we should have no Motive to our Devotion.

And as spiritual Worship must be done in Faith, so must it also be done with Joy and Love: it must be perform'd with Joy, for since we are delivered from the Curse of the Law by the Death of Christ, no groundless Doubts, no servile Fears, no abject Dispositions of the Mind, can be consistent with that Christian Liberty our Saviour hath purchased for us: for who can meditate on his glorious Triumphs over Sin, Death, and the Devil; and the gracious Priviledges obtain'd, and seal'd to us by his Blood, but must also with the blessed Virgin, say, *My Soul doth magnify the Lord, and my Spirit doth rejoyce in God my Saviour?* Who, as He delights in Charity, when it proceeds from a cheerful Heart, so is He pleas'd with our Devotion, when it is attended with spiritual Joy: for thus saith the Psalmist, *O be joyful in the Lord, all ye Lands, serve the Lord with Gladness, and come before his Presence with a Song. O go your Way into his Gates with Thanksgiving, and into his Courts with Praise.*

And to this Joy, which should attend our Devotion, the Love of God is inseparably joined: for that Joy, which the Acts of di-
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vine Worship excite in the Soul, and the Love of God's infinite Perfection, do mutually cherish and compleat each other. For we cannot chuse but rejoice in that which we love, nor chuse to love that which creates our Joy: and surely nothing can so justly claim our Love, and excite our Joy, as God, who in himself is the most lovely and excellent of all Beings; and the great Fountain of all Happiness to his Creatures.

But these Passions of Joy and Love must be tempered with the utmost Reverence and Humility; with the utmost Reverence, for altho' God be represented to us, under the Gospel, as less dreadful, than under the Law, it is nevertheless our Duty, to revere and stand in awe of him so much the more, in proportion to the greater Degrees of Light, by which his adorable Perfections are made more conspicuous; we must stand in awe, but not approach his Presence with a servile Fear, as Slaves do their tyrannical Masters, but draw near to him with a filial Fear, as dutiful Children do to their indulgent Father.

If we would revere God, we should think of the Preacher's Advice, *Keep thy Foot, when thou goest to the House of God, and be more ready to hear, than to give the Sacrifice of Fools; be not rash with thy Mouth, and let not thine Heart be hasty to utter any thing before God;*

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for God is in Heaven, and thou upon Earth; therefore let thy Words be few. And let us, with the Psalmist, fall down and kneel before the Lord our Maker.

But if we would please God, and be accepted of him, we must not only bend our Knees, but also bowe and humble our Hearts, when we approach his Throne; for what can be more absurd, than for us, who *are but sinful Dust and Ashes*; to be puffed up with Pride, before *whose Presence even the holy Angels veil their Faces with their Wings.*

Pride was not made for Man, it is inconsistent with the Spirit of Devotion, 'tis that cursed *Leaven of the Pharisees*, that will turn all our Prayers into an Abomination. Wherefore the Scripture tells us, that God *resisteth the proud, and seeth them afar off*; but that *the humble and contrite Spirit, God will not despise*: Nay, it assures us, that *the High and lofty One, that inhabiteth Eternity, whose name is Holy, dwelleth in the high and holy Place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble Spirit.*

And as spiritual Worship must be attended with all these *Fruits of the Spirit*, so must it also be done in *Truth and Sincerity*: in *Truth*, in Opposition to all false Worship, such as was that of the Samaritans, for *they worshipped they knew not what*; and in Opposition to the Shadows of the Law; for thus saith St John, *the Law was given by Moses, but*
Grace

Grace and Truth came by Jesus Christ: it must also be done in Sincerity, with all our Heart, and with all our Soul; for if the Love of the World possess our Hearts, our Worship will be in vain, for the Love of the World is Enmity with God; and therefore inconsistent with his Service, for we cannot serve God and Mammon.

Let all Pharisaical Saints than know, that God despiseth both them and their Devotion, and that, altho' in his Mercy He may bear with a while, and spare such Offerers, yet He will surely disdain their Oblations.

Finally to make our spiritual Worship compleat, and acceptable to God, we must offer up our Prayers, and Praises, in the prevailing Name, and through the all-sufficient Merits, of our Lord Jesus Christ. For He himself hath told us, that *without Him we can do nothing*, and that those, who shall come to the Father through him, God will in no wise cast out.

Christ crucified is the great fundamental Article of our Religion, for *Christ bought us with a Price, not with Silver and Gold, but with his own most pretious Blood*, hence, we read, he is called *our Propitiation, our Advocate, Mediator and Intercessor*; and that there is *no other Name under Heaven given to Man, in whom, and through whom, we may hope for Salvation, but only the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ*. And therefore, if we would have free

Access to the Father, and be accepted of him, we must go unto God through him.

How unsafe therefore is it for any one, to perswade himself or others, that Sincerity, as such, is enough to recommend us to, and assure us of God's Favour! For if so, the Gospel would seem to be a needless Institution, and Christ to have been born, lived, and died, and to intercede in vain!

And how dangerous is it likewise for us, to rely on our own Merits, or that of others, in the important Business of our Salvation!

And we may further observe, since there is but *one Mediator between God and Man, the Man Christ Jesus*, how impious it is to offer up in the Name of Saints, or Angels, our Prayers to God in Heaven! for we thereby disparage and reject the Merits and Intercession of Christ, which alone can make us acceptable at *the Throne of Grace*.

Having thus shewn that God is a Spirit, and what it is to worship him in Spirit, and in Truth, I shall conclude with two or three Inferences, with relation to God, and to ourselves. And

First, with relation to God, since *God is a Spirit*, therefore He is *invisible*, and tho' He cannot be the Object of our bodily Eye; yet He may be the Object of our spiritual Eye, here He may be seen indeed, but *through a Glass*

Glass darkly, by the Eye of Reason, and by the Eye of Faith, in his Word, and in his Works; but Time will come when our Reason shall be illuminated, and united to the great Author of Reason, and when Faith shall be swallowed up in Vision, when we shall see God Face to Face, and know him as we are known.

In the mean Time, by Vertue of this imperfect Vision of God through Faith, let us with Moses, *choose rather to suffer Affliction with the People of God, than to enjoy the Pleasures of Sin for a Season; let us esteem the Reproach of Christ greater Riches than all the Treasures of this World, and endure any Afflictions rather than abandon our Duty, as seeing him who is invisible.*

Secondly, since God is a Spirit, He is incorporeal, and therefore it is highly unreasonable and impious to frame any Image or Picture of him, not only because we are expressly forbidden to do so by the second Commandment; but because it is treating the Majesty of Heaven with contempt. For thus saith the Prophet, to whom will ye liken God? or what likeness will ye compare unto him?

If therefore, with the Church of Rome, we shall presume to represent the infinite Majesty of the Creator, under the scanty Form and Figure of any Creature; if we dare to
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change the Glory of the incorruptible God, into an Image made like to corruptible Man, to Birds, or four footed Beasts, or creeping Things, we shall, as the Apostle expresses it, tho' we profess ourselves wise, or infallible, become Fools.

Finally, since God is a Spirit, We must *worship him in Spirit and in Truth.* As under the Mosaick Law, God would accept of no Sacrifice, but what was young and perfect, *without Spot or Blemish*; so under the Gospel, He requires *a clean Heart, and a right Spirit,* renew'd by the Holy Spirit in all his Votarys.

Let us then *wash our Hearts, and Hands in Innocency,* and so let us *compass God's Altar*; or in other Words, when we call upon him in his House of Prayer, let us present unto him our Bodies and Souls, *a living Sacrifice, holy, and acceptable unto God, which is our reasonable Service.* So shall our Bodies be made *living Temples* unto the Holy Ghost, and our Spirits united to his.

The Omnipresence of God.

S E R M O N III.

P S A L M CXXXIX. 7, 8, 9, 10.

*Whether shall I go from thy Spirit?
or whether shall I flee from thy
Presence? If I ascend up into
Heaven Thou art there; if I make
my Bed in Hell, behold, Thou art
there; if I take the Wings of the
Morning, and dwell in the utter-
most Parts of the Sea, even there
shall thy Hand lead me, and thy
right Hand shall hold me.*

THE Psalmist here representeth to
our Conceptions the Divine Omni-
presence, in a Manner most elegant
and sublime, and lest our Appre-
hension

hension of that infinite Majesty being always near us, should disquiet and terrify us, and give us Occasion to say of every Place, what Jacob heretofore said of Padan-Aram, *how dreadful is this Place!* He softens and tempers the Notion of this tremendous Attribute with a most agreeable Sweetness of Expression, *Whether shall I go from thy Spirit? or whether shall I flee from thy Presence?* Not that he imagined, that there was, or could be, any place so secret, or obscure, as to hide, or conceal him, from God's all-piercing Eye; for he was fully perswaded, that God was intimately present to all Things, and in all Places whatsoever. For, saith he, *if I ascend up into Heaven, thou art there* (encircled with the Rays of eternal Glory, and plenteously communicating the refreshing Streams of thy everflowing Love to all thy Saints and Angels, which wait around thy Throne) *if I make my Bed in Hell, should be covered with Mountains, entombed in the Bowels of the Earth; or enclosed with thick Darkness, and Clouds of Smoke, in the Regions of the Damned: yet, behold, Thou, O God, art there,* there by thy Essence, Knowledge, Power, and Justice, executing thy Vengeance, and pouring out the full Vials of thy fierce and intolerable Wrath, on those obdurate and unrelenting Wretches, whom their own incorrigible Folly (in spite of thy Grace and Mercy often tender'd

to

to them, but in vain) hath plunged into that dreadful Gulf of everlasting Woe; much less therefore is there any Place in this World to be found, where we may hope to lie unobserved by him: *If I take the Wings of the Morning,* (i. e. if my Motion were as swift as that of Light) and dwell in the uttermost Parts of the Sea, in some solitary Place, where scarce any living Creature hath made its Abode, *even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me.*

By these different Expressions, the Immen- sity of God is variously and beautifully set forth, shewing that there is no Place in Earth or Sea, in Heaven or Hell; but what, at all Times, the divine Nature is intimately present to: the Words of my Text being thus paraphrased, I shall endeavour

- I. *First*, to prove the Reality of God's Omnipresence.
- II. *Secondly*, to shew in what Manner, He is said to be omnipresent. And
- III. *Thirdly*, what great Benefits we may reap from a due Consideration of this Attribute.

As to the *First* of these, (viz.) to prove the Reality of God's Omnipresence.

By it, we are to understand, that his Being hath no Bounds or Limits, but doth every

way spread and diffuse itself, in and thro' all Spaces whatsoever; that the presence of no other Being, tho' of the grossest Substance, is able to exclude him, nor the whole World to confine him. This may be proved,

First, from the infinite Perfections of God, for if the divine Essence had any Bounds of Place, it would be no less imperfect, than if it had Bounds of Time; for so far as any Thing admits of Limitation, either in Duration or Space, so far it hath Defect in Being. Wherefore if God were limited, in either respect, He would be nothing in comparison to what is infinite.

But whence should any such Limitation or Restraint arise? there is no superior Power to restrain him, for if there were, God would not be God, but that Being would be so, which was able to limit him. Neither can any such Restraint arise from the Nature of God, for to exist every where implies no Contradiction to it.

Nor can it be supposed, that God should limit his own Nature; for that would be to deny himself a Perfection, which He might enjoy; but where then would be his Wisdom? If God then hath not this Perfection, it must be, because He cannot, or will not, have it; but where then is his almighty Power, and his Love to his own Nature and Glory?

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But further, God's Omnipresence may be proved from his Eternity, for it is altogether as reasonable to allow, that his Essence is every where, as to allow, that it doth exist for ever: the same indivisible Essence, which reaches through all Times, may surely reach as well through all Spaces; because all Spaces are but a Point to his infinite Essence, as all Times are but a Moment to his Eternity.

The Nations of the World to him (as the Prophet expresses it) are as *the Dust of the Ballance, or the Drop of a Bucket*; and therefore the Essence of God must be allow'd to diffuse itself every where through that, which is no more than a Grain of Dust to him: yea, *counted to him less than Nothing, and Vanity*.

This Attribute may likewise be proved from God's universal Providence, and the immutability of his Nature, but waving this abstracted way of Reasoning, I chuse to prove it by two or three express Texts of Scripture, which to us, who profess to believe it to be the Word of God, must be most efficacious, to convince our Understandings of the Truth of this, as well as of all other Doctrines therein delivered; thus Jeremiah, *Am I a God at band, saith the Lord, and not a God a far off; do not I fill Heaven and Earth**? Thus saith the Wise-man, *The Eyes of the Lord are in every Place, beholding the evil and the good*†.

* Ch. 23. 23. 24.

† Prov. 15. 3.

And thus St Paul, *There is no Creature that is not manifest in his Sight, but all Things are naked and opened to the Eyes of him, with whom we have to do**.

But altho' these Texts of Scripture establish the Doctrine of God's Omnipresence, may it not be urged, that there are others, which seem with equal Force to overthrow it? As particularly those Passages wherein God is represented, as moving to some Place or Person, which imply his Distance from them, before his Motion to either. Thus, *I will go down now, saith the Lord, and see, whether they have done altogether, according to the Cry, that is come up unto me †*.

To this we may reply, that we must not from thence infer, that the Essence of God did, by a proper local Motion, descend from Heaven to the Earth; but that the Spirit of God is pleased, by such like Expressions, to exhibit to us some special Manifestation of that Essence, in some marvellous Acts of Mercy, or Justice, of Goodness, or Power, as is evident from his Preservation of the three Children in the fiery Furnace, by his immediate Presence in the Form of his beloved Son, and from the Destruction of Sodom, by raining down Fire from Heaven.

Since therefore God is present in all Places, and consequently a Witness, and Judge of

* Hebr. 4. 13. † Gen. 18. 21.

all our Actions, Words, and Thoughts, what *manner of Persons ought we to be, in all holy Conversation, and Godliness, who live, and move, and have our being, in the Sight and actual Presence of God, who is of purer Eyes than to behold Iniquity!*

The Manner of whose divine Presence I proceed now, according to my *Second Particular*, to enquire into.

I would not here be thought, to take upon me, nicely to determine, and accurately explain the Mode, whereby the boundless Nature of God doth exist in, or fill all Spaces whatsoever. No, that would be a Presumption vain, and absurd, for *God is great, and greatly to be praised, and his Greatness is unsearchable**. What is infinite cannot be comprehended, by that which is finite; for if it were, for that very Reason, it would cease to be infinite; it is sufficient for us, in this Enquiry, to guide ourselves by that Light, which our Reason, directed by Scripture, doth afford us.

Following therefore the Conduct of Reason, directed by Scripture, we may venture to say,

First, that God is intimately present with all his Creatures by his Essence, not divided into different Parts, nor changeable into va-

* Psal. 145. 3.

rious Figures; nor to be bounded with any Cords, but those of his everflowing Love: neither may we imagine, that it is any Reflection on his essential Purity, in that He is said to be present to those Things, or in those Places, which are impure; the Sun is not defiled, by the unclean Places it shines upon; nor the spiritual Nature of the Soul corrupted, by the diseased, or rotten Body, which it animates and informs; much less then can the eternal Source of all Light, the immutable Father of all Spirits, receive any Pollution from those Impurities, which Men and Devils can produce, or Earth and Hell contain. And therefore,

Secondly, God is present with all his Creatures, by his Power and Goodness, for the divine Power, Goodness, and Essence are inseparable; as He created, so He now preserves Heaven and Earth, and all Things that are in them: He first ordained, and still supports the annual Revolution of the celestial Bodies, for the manifestation of his own Glory, and the Benefit of us Men: to his Power and Goodness we stand indebted, that the Sun doth rule the Day, and the Moon and Stars the Night; that both the one, and the other, do shed their refreshing Beams upon us, and all Things here below: At his pleasure, *He bindeth or looseth the sweet Influences of the Pleiades, and the Bands of Orion: He bringeth forth*

*Mazaroh in his Season, and guideth Arcturus with his Sons: He knoweth the Ordinancies of Heaven, and setteth the Dominion thereof upon the Earth**: not confining himself, as Epicurus vainly imagined, in an inactive State, within the Boundaries of Heaven, but graciously displaying his providential Care over Earth and Seas.

The Earth is full of thy Riches, saith the Psalmist, so is the great and wide Sea, wherein are things creeping innumerable, both small and great Beasts. All things wait on thee, that thou mayest give them their Meat in due Season: Thou openest thy Hand, and they are filled with good; Thou hidest thy Face, and they are troubled; Thou takest away their Breath, they die, and return to their Dust.

Thirdly, God is present with all his Creatures, by his infinite Knowledge, whatever is contained in the great Deep, whatever is shut up in the Bowels of the Earth; nay, whatever the Heart of Man, which as the Prophet saith, *is deceitful above all things, ponders within itself, is all naked and opened to the Eye of God, who with one single undivided Act of Understanding, beholds, looks through all things, past, present, and to come: I, saith the Lord, search the Heart, I try the Reins, even to give every Man according to his Ways, and according to the Fruit of his Doings†.*

* Job 38. 31, &c.

† Jerem. 17. 10.

To the same Purpose are those Words which follow my Text, *If I say surely the Darknes shall cover me, even the Night shall be Light about me; yea, the Darknes hideth not from thee, but the Night shineth as the Day, the Darknes and the Light are both alike to thee.*

But altho' God in respect of his Essence, Power, Goodness, and Knowledge, doth every where actually exist, yet there are some Places, wherein He may be said to be, in a more especial and peculiar manner, than in others: thus is He said to be in Heaven, not as if He were there exclusively of all other Places, for at the same Time that we are told, that *Heaven is his Throne*, we are likewise assured, that *the Earth is his Footstool**; but because He is pleased to make a more eminent Discovery, of his most excellent Glory, to his beloved Saints and Angels, in Heaven, than he doth to his most faithful Servants here on Earth: in like manner, as the Soul of Man (if we may be allowed to make the Comparison) tho' essentially present, in all the Parts of the human Body, yet, in a more especial manner, is said to be, or reside, in the Head or Heart, in regard to the more noble Operations, which it doth exert in them:

* Acts 7. 49.

Secondly, God is said to be, in a peculiar and gracious Manner, present with the faithful in their publick Assemblies: indeed, where-soever his Servants meet to call upon his holy Name, tho' driven together into Dens or Caves of the Earth, thro' the Malice and cruelty of blood-thirsty Men, there will the Almighty be in the midst of them, to impart the Effusions of his Grace, and saving Influences of his Spirit.

But it seems as it were his peculiar Delight to reside among his Saints, when they are assembled and met together, in Places consecrated to his Honour, and solemnly set apart for his Service, by publick Authority, where He is worshipp'd *in the Beauty of Holiness*, with that external Order and Decency of the Body, and with that internal Purity of the Soul, as best becometh those, who would efficaciously invoke the God of all Order, Decency, and Purity: thus the Lord, in his Answer to Solomon's Prayer made at the Dedication of the Temple, which he had built, declares unto him, *that his Eyes should be open, and his Ears attent, unto the Prayer in that Place; for now had He chosen and sanctified that House, that his Name might be there for ever, and that his Eyes and Heart might be there perpetually* *.

* 2 Chron. 7. 15, 16.

What Comfort then and Encouragement have we frequently to assemble ourselves together, in this *sacred House*, this *House of Prayer*, to call upon the great God of Heaven, to forgive us our Sins, to assist us by his Grace, to deliver us out of our Distresses, to comfort us under them by his Spirit, and to shower down his manifold Blessings, temporal and spiritual, upon our Bodies and Souls!

How much therefore are some of those to be blamed, and others of them to be pitied, who thro' Pride of Heart, or Weakness of Mind, (not regarding, either the lawful Authority of the supream Magistrate which enjoins, or the Peace and Unity of the Church, which requires Uniformity as to Time and Place for Worship, as well as Agreement in Judgment) divide and separate themselves, out of pretence of greater Purity, from these true Sanctuaries of undefiled Religion; as if those Temples, which heretofore were hallowed, were now defiled by the solemn Act of Consecration, and as if they were assured, that God would accept their perverse way of Will-worship, before that which He himself hath shewn, and appointed to be observed.

Thirdly, God doth, in a peculiar manner, manifest his Presence in the Hearts, or Consciences, of all Men: To the Conscience of

the wicked Man, let him be never so great and powerful, He manifesteth himself, as reproving, and condemning him for his impieties, and fills it with such dreadful Apprehensions of his fiery Indignation, as cannot be endured, for *a wounded Conscience who can bear?* A Conscience wounded by the envenomed Arrows of Sin, and awak'ned by the insupportable Terrors of God's Wrath?

But to the Conscience of the just Man, God manifesteth himself, as approving, and applauding him for his vertuous Conduct, and speaks such Comfort, Peace, and Joy, as pass all Understanding.

The good Man is stiled *the Temple of God*, that *Holy of Holies*, in which the blessed Trinity, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, are pleased to make their Abode: how much then are we all concerned, *to purify our Hearts from all filthiness of Flesh and Spirit*, that we may comfortably enjoy, and not be altogether unworthy of so divine a Guest!

I proceed now to my last Particular, which was to shew what great Benefits, we may reap from a due Consideration of God's Omnipresence. And,

First, A due Consideration of God's Omnipresence, will be of great Use, to prevent us from falling into Sin, or living in any known

Sin whatever, for were we throughly perswad-
ed, that the just and almighty Governour of
the World, is every where, just by us, with
us, and in us; beholding every Thing we do,
hearing every Word we speak, and observing
every Motion of our Heart, the Sense of the
divine Majesty, must needs be more effectual
to deter us from Sin, than all the Tempta-
tions of the World can be to allure us into it.
For he must be the most stupid and insolent
Offender, who shall dare to transgress, at
the same time, that he believes himself to be
in the Presence of that eternal Judge, whose
Eyes are most penetrating, whose Power is
irresistible, whose Sentence is irreversibile, and
whose Vengeance is intolerable.

It was to this Perswasion, that God's faith-
ful Servants of old imputed their Preserva-
tion from Sin, and their Recovery out of it,
when they had unhappily transgress'd: thus,
saith David, *I have set God always before me,
for He is on my right Hand, therefore I shall not
fall**. And thus Job after he had fallen, *I have
heard of thee, by the hearing of the Ear; but
now mine Eye seeth thee, wherefore I abhor my
self, and repent in Dust and Ashes †*.

And therefore did we likewise set the Lord
always before us, or believe him present with

* Psal. 16. 9.

† Ch. 44. 5, 6.

us, we should be able, inspite of all the soft Allurements, or menacing Frowns, of a sinful World, to baffle, and discard, every Temptation, by saying within ourselves, as Joseph did, *how can I do this great Wickedness, and sin against God?* And if we should be overcome by the Surprize or Violence of a Temptation, as St Peter was, yet, if with him, we look up to God and our Lord Jesus, we should be as truly concern'd for, and repent of our Sin, as he did.

Secondly, a due Consideration of God's Omnipresence, would have a most prevailing Influence, not only towards a good Life in general, but would in an especial manner animate and regulate our Devotion; for should we retire into our Closets to offer up our Prayers to our heavenly Father, the Belief that He is with us, and *seeth in secret*, would make us fervent, but humble; serious without Presumption; sincere without Hypocrisy; constant without Wavering or Distraction; in a word it would make us behave in such a manner, as suiteth best with our Necessity, and his Glory.

And when *we draw nigh to God in his House of Prayer*, in our publick Assemblies, were we convinced, that God was then, in a peculiar manner, present with us, with what Humility and Reverence, with what Affection and

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Devotion, should *we worship and fall down, and kneel before the Lord our Maker!*

In offering up our united Prayers and Thanks to God, for his dayly Mercies, our Hearts would be full of Joy, in that we are here below indulged the Priviledge, which the blessed Choir of Saints and Angels have above, *of singing Halleluiahs to the King of Kings, and Lord of Lords.*

And while the sacred Scriptures are read or preach'd unto us, with what an attentive Ear, and well disposed Heart, should we listen to, and receive them, not as *the Word of Man*, but as *the Word of God, which alone is able to make us wise unto Salvation!*

Under this Head we may observe, that altho' God is every where present, on Earth as well as in Heaven, yet we are obliged to direct our Prayers, and other Acts of Devotion, to him only as in Heaven; thus Solomon, *Hear Thou from thy dwelling Place, even from Heaven**; and thus in that admirable Form of Prayer, which our Lord taught his Disciples, He bids them *say, Our Father, which art in Heaven:* And that because in Heaven God hath fixt his Throne of Grace, on which He sits to hear our Petitions, and answer our Desires, as seemeth best to his own Goodness and Wisdom: and because

* 2 Chron. 6. 21.

our Prayers, and other Acts of Devotion, on account of their own and our Imperfections are only acceptable to him, as they are offered in the Name, and through the Mediation of his well beloved Son, who long since hath ascended into Heaven, where *He sits at the right Hand of the Majesty on high, with whom He ever lives to make Intercession for us.*

And from the Consideration of God's Omnipresence, we may likewise observe, how impious it is to direct our Prayers to any other Being, besides the true God. For if, with the Church of Rome, we pray to Saints or Angels, we reflect on the all-sufficient Merits of Christ, who is *the only Mediator between God and Man*, because we unwarrantably apply to other Mediators in our behalf: and we sacrilegiously *rob God of his Honour, which He will not give to another*, but will punish those who give it to another with *the irresistible Fire of his Jealousy.*

Nor is this Practice less absurd than impious, because we must either suppose those Saints or Angels, to whom we pray, to be omnipresent, and so deify them; or else we must own, that our worshipping them is very senseless; because by the necessary Finitude of their Nature, they must be always, or for the most part, absent from, or altogether
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ignorant of us, and our necessities, and therefore unable to answer our Requests.

But *lastly*, a due Consideration of God's Omnipresence will teach us to behave well, in every State or Condition of Life:

For, are we possess'd of Riches, or advanced to Honour, the Thoughts of God's Presence, will mortify Pride and Ill-nature, the usual Effects of Riches and Honour, & plant in their Room a grateful Sense of God's Favours, (the sole Author of all good Things) and an universal Charity towards our Neighbour.

On the other hand, are we in Trouble, Sorrow, Need, Sicknes, or any other Adversity, if these are brought upon us through our own Wickedness, they are but a due Recompence of our Folly: but if they are brought upon us, by the wise Dispensations of Providence, for the Exercise of our Faith, and a Trial of our Patience, the Reflection on God's actual Presence will cheer our drooping Spirits, and *the Lifting up the Light of his Countenance* will afford us such Comfort and Joy, as shall greatly over-balance all the Pressure of our Afflictions.

Let us then, through a steady Confidence, and Faith of an omnipresent God, unshaken, walk securely and joyfully, through all the Changes, and Chances, of this mortal Life;
for

for God hath assured us, that *He will not lay on us more than we are able to bear, but will with the Temptation, whatsoever it be, make a way for us to escape*; that whensoever his Rod shall strike and afflict us, his holy Spirit shall heal and comfort us; and that if we behave ourselves under our Troubles and Afflictions, as becometh those who acknowledge his actual Presence here, these *light Troubles and Afflictions, which are but for a Moment, shall work for us a far more exceeding Weight of Glory, in the full Fruition of his glorious Presence hereafter.*

The Omniscience of God.

S E R M O N I V.

H E B R. IV. 13. latter part.

All things are naked, and opened to the Eyes of him, with whom we have to do.

IN the preceding Verse the Apostle, setting forth the wonderful Efficacy of God's Word, tells us, that *it is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two edged Sword; piercing even to the dividing asunder of Soul and Spirit, and of the Joints and Marrow, and is a Discerner of the Thoughts and Intents of the Heart:* It is stiled quick, like the incarnate Word from Heaven, because it is not only a living, but a quickning Word, making those Souls, *which are dead in Trespasses and Sins, alive unto God:* and therefore it is stiled powerful, on account of its
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wonderful Effects, for it is *the ministration of the Spirit*, which most effectually convinces and converts the humble and contrite Heart, but confounds and condemns impenitent and obdurate Sinners: for *it is sharper than a two edged Sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of Soul and Spirit, and of the Joints and Marrow*, that is, of the most hard and compact, the most intimate and secret Parts of the Sinner, such as no natural Reason can reach, but such as the Word of God can pierce through; for that Word *is a Discerner of the Thoughts, and Intents of the Heart, tho' it be deceitful above all Things*: for it sees through all its Thoughts and secret Desires; all its sudden and close Resolutions; and all its Imaginations or Motions whatsoever: and in the Verse of my Text, the Foundation of this efficacious Energy of God's Word is exhibited to us, (*viz.*) because the great Author of it searcheth and trieth all Things. For *there is no Creature that is not manifest in his Sight; but all things are naked, and open'd unto the Eyes of him, with whom we have to do.* In speaking to which Words I shall endeavour to prove in as brief and clear a manner as I can,

I. *First*, that God is Omniscient, or knoweth all Things.

II. *Secondly*, to illustrate the Omniscience of God, by comparing it with the Knowledge of Man, because we shall thereby better perceive, how infinitely God's Understanding surpasseth ours, and consequently better apprehend its amazing and adorable Excellence.

III. *Thirdly*, what Use we should make of the Consideration of God's Omniscience.

First, then I am to prove in as brief and clear a manner, as I can, that God is Omniscient, or knoweth all Things. This may be proved,

First, from the infinite Perfection of his Nature. For since the Essence of God, which all acknowledge, who believe that there is a God, is infinitely perfect; it must therefore follow, that all possible Perfections, without any Imperfections, must be in him: and therefore Knowledge, which is allowed to be one of the noblest of all Perfections, must belong to him without any Deficiency, because, without it, all other Perfections would suffer much in, if not altogether lose their intrinsic Worth; for without Knowledge, what would the greatest Power be, but brutal Force? and what would Mercy, Goodness, and Love be, but the Result of blind Chance? for there can be no Wisdom, where there is no Understanding: and therefore that Knowledge,

ledge, which fully extends to, or takes in all Objects, must belong to God: for if there were any Objects beyond the Reach of God's Understanding, the Ignorance of them, would be a great Defect, such as could not be ascribed to the most perfect Being, without a Contradiction. The same Truth may be prov'd,

Secondly, From the infinite Happiness of the divine Nature; for since God is the Fountain and Centre of all that is good, there can be nothing wanting to compleat his Happiness; and therefore He must have infinite Knowledge, because otherwise, since He himself is an infinite Being, He would not be able to understand himself, and therefore could not enjoy the greatest Happiness, for this must consist in the Knowledge and Fruition of that Being, which is infinitely good: and therefore Knowledge without any Imperfection must be attributed to him; for if it had any Defect, it would so far include Ignorance, and consequently so far limit, and diminish the divine Happiness.

We must therefore, either deny, that God, who is infinitely wise and powerful, is compleatly happy, or that Knowledge doth conduce to Happiness, which are Suppositions evidently absurd; or else we must grant, that his Understanding admits of no Imperfection; and therefore we must own and confess

fefs that it clearly fees through and comprehends all Things, not only himself, but all Things else, because all other Things *are the Works of his Hands*, and therefore He must know them, because they are sustain'd, and could not subsist without his Providence.

But perhaps it may be urged, that the Knowledge of Things created doth no ways contribute to the Diminution or Completion of the divine Happiness, because God was equally happy as well before, as since the Formation of the World; and consequently God's Omniscience is not to be inferr'd from his infinite Happiness: To this we reply, that altho' the divine Happiness being in itself absolutely perfect, was therefore not increased or completed by the subsequent Knowledge of the Creature; yet since God is immutable, his Knowledge must be one and *the same to Day, yesterday, and for ever*; and therefore He not only knows himself, but also beholds in himself, all Things that have been, that now are, or hereafter shall be; and consequently *all Things must be naked and opened to the Eyes of him, with whom we have to do*.

But waving this abstracted way of Reasoning, I chuse to confirm the Doctrine of God's Omniscience, from the Dictates of Conscience, and the infallible Word of God.

God's Omniscience is proved from the Dictates of Conscience, because whence should
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arise that Peace and Pleasure of Mind to the innocent and good Man, which this World can neither give, nor take away, but from a Sense of an omniscient Judge, who secretly manifesteth himself to, and assures him, that He graciously accepts of, and will reward his Vertues?

And on the other hand, whence arise those Terrors of Conscience in the Sinner's Soul upon the Commission of some heinous Sin, tho' transacted in the Dark, when no Witnesses were by, nay, tho' it were only begun or conceived in his Imagination; but from a Sense of the same omniscient Judge, whose *Eyes are ten thousand times brighter than the Sun, and too pure to behold Iniquity without Abhorrence, or to spare the Sinner without Repentance?*

From the Pleasures therefore of a good Conscience, and Pains of a bad one, we may infer, that wicked, as well as good Men, are firmly perswaded, that nothing is hid, but that *all Things are naked, and opened to the Eyes of God.*

And as for the Scripture Proofs to this purpose, they are so plain as not to be perverted, nor evaded; and too numerous to be recited; out of which I shall single out these few, which follow, *Hell is naked, saith Job, and Destruction hath no Covering; his Eyes are upon the ways of Man, and He seeth all his goings:*

goings: and there is no Darknes, nor Shadow of Death, where the Workers of Iniquity may hide themselves *. To the like purpose, the Psalmist saith, O Lord, thou hast searched me out, and known me; Thou knowest my down-sitting, and mine uprising; Thou understandest my Thoughts long before; Thou art about my Path, and about my Bed, and spiest out all my ways; for lo, there is not a word in my Tongue, nor thought in my Heart, but Thou, O Lord, knowest it altogether †.

By these Passages of Scripture we are assured, that God seeth and observeth the Thoughts of all Mankind, and that all the vain Fancies and Imaginations, idle Words and Wishes, lustful Desires, wicked Projects and Designs; in a word, whatever good or evil, entreth into the Heart of Man, are all in the full View of God, and *naked and opened* to his Sight.

Well may we therefore say, with holy David, *Lift up thy self, O Lord, Thou Judge of the Earth, and reward the proud after their deserving: Lord, how long shall the ungodly triumph? How long shall all wicked Doers, speak so disdainfully, and make such proud Boasting? They smite down thy People, O Lord, and trouble thine Heritage; and yet they say, the Lord shall not see, neither shall the God of Jacob regard it. Take heed ye unwise among the People,*

* Job 34. 21, 22. † Psal. 139.

O ye Fools, when will ye understand? He that planted the Ear, shall He not hear? or He that made the Eye, shall He not see? He that chastiseth the Heathen, shall He not correct? He that teacheth Man Knowledge, shall He not know? The Lord knoweth the Thoughts of Man, that they are but vain.

Having thus prov'd the divine Omniscience,
I proceed now to my

Second Particular, which is to endeavour to illustrate the Omniscience of God, by comparing it with the Knowledge of Man, because we shall thereby better perceive how infinitely God's Understanding surpasseth ours, and consequently better apprehend its amazing and adorable Excellence.

The Faculty of Understanding, which God hath given to Man, is a noble and divine Perfection: for by this he is able to consider not only the Things which lie before him, but in a moment to survey the most distant Parts of the Earth; to acquaint himself, not only with the Affairs of the present Times, but to search into, and examine the Transactions of former Ages.

By this he is able to ascend up into the Heavens, and contemplate the several Motions, Magnitudes, and Distances of those glorious Bodies, the Sun, Moon, and Stars, which shine therein.

Nay, by this, assisted by the Light of God's Word, he is able to ascend up to the highest Heavens, where the divine Majesty in all his Glory, sits enthron'd, surrounded with an *innumerable Company of Angels, and Archangels, and the Spirits of just Men made perfect, tasting of those Rivers of Pleasure, which make glad the City of God, and singing Hallelujahs to him that sitteth upon the Throne, and to the Lamb, for ever.*

And yet, this great Perfection of the Soul is but a feeble Ray of the divine Understanding, to which in comparison it is infinitely less, than the dim Light of a Glow-worm is to the piercing Rays of the Sun, when it shines in its brightest Lustre.

For of all the Things past, present, or to come, how few are they that fall within the Reach of our Understandings!

As to Things past, tho' we had Time and Abilities to read, Judgment to digest, and Memory to retain the Annals of former Ages, yet how little would this be, if compared to those Things, which lie concealed in Darkness, or buried in Oblivion!

And of Things present, the Bounds of our Knowledge extend no further than to a few Things, which are obvious to our Senses, or made known to us by Report.

And as for Things to come, we know much less, for besides some future Things, which
God

God hath revealed to us in his Word; and some future Effects, which Men of Learning and Experience can foretel by their necessary Connexion to their Causes; most all other future Events, even those as most nearly concern us to know, are shut up in such thick and dark Clouds; as entirely hide them from our Sight.

And as our Knowledge is contracted with respect to its Object, so are our Reasonings about it attended with great Difficulties: Small is the Extent of our Knowledge, and much is the Trouble by which it is attained: the Truths we aim at, are not to be discovered without a close Attention and continued Application of Mind: for such is our Weakness, that we cannot see Things directly and immediately as they are in themselves, but only by reflected Rays from other Beings: and therefore it requires much Labour and Diligence, before we can arrive at the desired Conclusion; and when we have done all we can, such is the Uncertainty of this Method of Reasoning, that instead of satisfactory Knowledge, we seldom advance any further than to a probable Conjecture: and since our Method of Reasoning depends upon inferring one Thing from another, we may be deceived, either by arguing truly from false Principles, having erroneously conceived them to be true ones; or by arguing

fallly from true Principles: in both Cafes the Mifchief is equally the fame; for if we argue fallly from true Principles, we stumble upon a Rock, and fo fall; and if we argue truly upon falfe Principles, we walk upon Quickfands, and fo fink.

And if from Principles, true or falfe, we may be deceived, what Care ought we to take in Cafes of a moral and religious Nature, becaufe, if we are miftaken, we may fall into dangerous Errors, and reason ourfelves into our own Deftroction: for even thofe, who ftile themfelves Saints, may reason themfelves into an allowed Breach of God's Commands; and *make Shipwreck of that Faith*, without which they cannot be faved.

But further, fince our Knowledge is chiefly gain'd by inferring Conclufions from preceding Premifes; 'tis evident, that our Advancement in Knowledge muft be fucceffive, becaufe the Eye of our Mind, like that of our Body, is able to view only at the fame Time one fingle and minute Part of the fame Object diftinctly; for even thofe, whole great Capacity of Soul feems to place them as far above fome groveling Perfons of their own Species, as they themfelves fall fhort of the intellectual Powers of the brighteft Angel, tho' they can, as it were in a Moment, attend to Variety of Things, yet muft own, that there muft be fome fucceffive Points of Duration

ration pass, before they can apply their Understandings to a distinct View of each of them.

And when we have applied with all our Diligence and Sagacity to know and understand them, how slight and superficial are all our Discoveries! For all those Objects, which we see, or smell, or taste, or touch, have such intricate Difficulties attending them, as perhaps the most diligent Inquirer into the Nature of Things, never was, nor will be able to surmount; every Plant, or Herb, or Flower of the Field; the most inconsiderable Insect, that flies in the Air, or creepeth on the Ground; nay, the least Grain of Sand, hath so many profound Secrets in their Composition, as have been, and will be unfathomable Mysteries to the acutest Philosophers of all Ages.

Now, if with this Representation of the Imperfection of our Understanding, we take a View of the divine Omniscience, so far as its excessive Brightness will permit us, we shall perceive how infinitely it surpasseth ours, and consequently the better apprehend its amazing and adorable Excellence: for God being infinitely perfect, his Understanding must be infinite, and therefore it must be absolutely free from all that Weakness and Imperfection which ours doth labour under; it is infinite, and therefore whatever hath, had, or shall have

have a Being, must be *all naked and open'd to his all seeing Eye*: and consequently all Creatures rational, or irrational, with all their Natures, Properties, and Effects; all their Alterations, Changes, and Revolutions, are clearly manifest in his Sight: for surely He, who made, and will hereafter *judge the World*, cannot be ignorant, or forgetful of those Things which have been done therein.

And as for those Things which now are, from the highest Angel in Heaven, to the poorest Beggar upon Earth; the Birds of the Air; the Fishes in the Sea; the Insects on the Ground; and every Creature in the Universe; that all these are under the View of God, we learn from his providential Care, by which all Things are preserved, and without which nothing can subsist: for *not a Sparrow doth fall to the Ground without our Father; and even the Hairs of our Head are all numbered.*

And as for Things to come, which we fain would pry into, yet for the most part are utterly unacquainted with, these are all, as well as Things past and present, most clearly known to God; nay, to speak properly, there is no difference of Tenses, such as past, and future, applicable to him; for those Things, which, on account of our limited Duration, are said to be past, when they cease to be; and call'd future, when they do not yet exist,
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are all present to God; because his indivisible Essence, and consequently his infinite Knowledge, actually reaches thro' all Times, as well as thro' all Places; because all Times are but a Moment to his Eternity, as all Places are but a Point to his infinite Nature.

Hence God speaks of Things to come, as if they were already produced; and *calleth Things that are not, as if they were**; because Things, that are not, are the Objects of his Knowledge; and will at his Pleasure receive Existence from his Power: hence He *knoweth all our Thoughts afar off, and spieth out all our Ways*; and seeth not only what we do at present, but foreseeth what Determinations our Wills, though endued with Freedom, shall hereafter make: for thus He told the Children of Israel, before they entred into the Land of Promise, that *when they should have taken Possession of it, they would go a whoring from him, and serve other Gods, and that they would forsake him, and break his Covenant †*. Hence it appears, that all the Thoughts, Purposes, and Resolutions of our Hearts, *whether present or future*, are known to God.

And yet this Knowledge of his, is not like ours, collected by Discourse, or as the Logicians say, by drawing Conclusions from preceding premises; but by Intuition, that is, by directly and immediately beholding Things

* Rom. 4. 17. † Deut. 31. 16.

in themselves, or rather in his own Nature, for that is the eternal Model or Exemplar of all created Beings, distinctly exhibitivè of all that is, or ever can be; and therefore the Measure and Standard, (independent of, and antecedent to all created Beings) not only of what actually is, but also of the whole Possibility of Being. And this He sees, and comprehends, all at once, whether they be Things past, present, or to come, at one and the same Moment: for as my Text expresses it, *There is not any Creature, that is not manifest in his Sight, but all Things are naked, and opened to the Eyes of him, with whom we have to do.*

From this Comparison, which hath been made between the Knowledge of God, and that of Man, it appears, that the Knowledge of God is most deep and intimate, reaching to the very Essence of Things; whereas ours is but slight and superficial; His is clear and distinct; ours but dark and confused; His infallible; ours liable to Mistakes; His easy and without Difficulty, always present and actual; ours gotten by sore Travel, and through the defects of Memory or Age, soon lost; His is by Intuition, all at once; ours gotten by Discourse, successively, and by Degrees; His universal, extending to all Objects, fully comprehending all Things; whereas ours is narrow and reaching only to a few Things,

Things, and that which is wanting to it, as the Preacher saith, *cannot be numbred**. Whose short, but full Account of the Weakness, and Imperfection of our Understanding, I cannot here pass by, for saith he in his Book of Wisdom, *What Man is he that can know the Counsel of God? or who can think, what the Will of the Lord is? For the Thoughts of mortal Men are miserable, and their Devices but uncertain: for the corruptible Body presseth down the Soul; and the earthly Tabernacle weigheth down the Mind, that museth upon many Things: and hardly do we guess aright at Things, that are upon Earth; and with Labour do we find the Things, that are before us; but the Things that are in Heaven, who hath searched out? and thy Counsel, O Lord, who hath known, except Thou give Wisdom, and send thy holy Spirit from above?* †

Thus having spoken to my two first Particulars, I proceed now to my *Third* Particular, which is to shew what Use we should make, and what Benefit we may receive from the Consideration of God's Omniscience. And

First, the Consideration of God's Omniscience should teach us to pay all possible Esteem and Honour to the Majesty of God; for it was the Reflection on this amazing and adorable Attribute, that made holy David

* Eccles. 1. 15.

† Chap. 9.

confess, that *such Knowledge was too wonderful and excellent for him, and that he could not attain unto it*: and made St Paul in like manner exclaim, *O the Depth of the Riches, both of the Wisdom and Knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his Judgments, and his Ways past finding out!* And if we consider this adorable Attribute, we shall be induced to say, *O God, who is like unto thee?* For who beside our God is able, at one single View, most intimately to comprehend all Things?

And shall we then highly esteem and honour those who are remarkably eminent, (in this imperfect Scene of Action) for their Skill in Law, Physick, or Divinity? And shall we not much rather admire, praise, and adore, the great Author and Fountain of all Wisdom and Knowledge, whose Understanding is universal, and admits of no Bounds?

Struck with Wonder and Amazement at this glorious Perfection, we should fall down prostrate before his Throne, and most devoutly worship his all-seeing Majesty.

Secondly, the Consideration of God's Omniscience should teach us to entertain an humble and low Opinion of our own Understandings, and not to be over confident and curious, in our Enquiries and Disquisitions into the profound Things of God.

For what have we, that is properly our own, beside Ignorance and Sin, with all the

numerous Train of Infirmities incident to our Nature? and if, with much Toil and Difficulty, we have attained to some small Degree of Knowledge above some of our fellow Creatures, shall this puff us up with Pride, and induce us to treat them with Contempt? Have we so little *learned* either our selves or *Christ*, as not to know, that whatever Knowledge we have attain'd to, is not so much the necessary Product of our own Parts and Industry, as the Gift of him, who *is the Father of Light*, and Author of all Perfection; for *Paul may plant, and Apollos may water, but it is God that giveth the Increase*; nay, we may spend all our Time, and ourselves too, in the pursuit of Knowledge, and yet, without God blesteth our Labours, we may, like St Peter, *toil all Night, and catch nothing*.

If we have then any share of Knowledge above our Brethren, instead of proudly ascribing the Glory of it to ourselves, we should humbly thank the supreme *Giver of all good Gifts*, who hath graciously committed such a Talent to us, and should employ it to his Honour, our own good, and that of other Men.

Instead of being proud of our own Understanding, we should admire and adore the Understanding of God, who from all Eternity, with one glance of his Eye, sees through and comprehendeth all Things; while we,

with all our boasted Skill, know nothing as we ought to know, fully understand not one thing in Nature: and this Truth, the wisest Scribe, and most subtle Disputer of the World, were it not for the natural Pride of his Heart, would confess; and say with the Apostle, not only of heavenly Things, but also of the Things that are before us, *here we see through a Glass darkly, and know but in part*; because the Priviledge of a more perfect Vision is reserved to compleat the Happiness of a future State, when the Author of all Knowledge shall refine and inlarge our Faculties, to see and contemplate the Height and Depth of his Love, and receive and enjoy the inexhaustible Treasures of his Wisdom to all Eternity.

If the Reflection on the Excellence of God's Knowledge, be enough to remind us of our own Ignorance, and to humble and confound all vain Conceit of our Understanding with regard to the transient Things of this Life: how much more should it depress, and *cast down all high Imaginations*, and check and mortify all presumptuous Enquiries into *the things of God!* for how ill doth it become us, who *are but sinful Dust and Ashes*, to judge of and measure God's Ways and Thoughts by our own? for *as high as the Heavens are above the Earth, so far, as the Prophet expresseth it, are his Ways above our Ways, and his Thoughts above our Thoughts**. * *Isai. 55. 9.*

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Since the secret Ways and Thoughts of God are infinitely above ours, or as the Psalmist expresses it, since *his Ways are in the Sea, his Paths in the great Waters; and his Foot-steps are not known*, let us not impiously presume to fathom those Depths of God, which are unsearchable; but let us believe them to be perfectly conformable to *Righteousness and Equity*, for these are the *Habitation of God's Seat*: Since He is a God of Truth as well as Knowledge, whatever He hath revealed as the Objects of our Faith, let us without Distrust or wavering assent to and embrace them; and whatever He hath manifested as the Rules of our Practice, let us without murmuring or gainsaying obey them.

Thirdly, The Consideration of God's Omniscience should teach us to *stand in awe of God, and sin not*; for can there be any greater Restraint upon our Thoughts and Actions, any stronger Preservative from offending in either, than seriously to consider and meditate upon the Omniscience of God? *I am*, saith God to Abraham, *the almighty God, walk before me, and be thou perfect**; which evidently implies, that the best way to aim and arrive at Perfection, is so to behave, as in the Presence, and under the Inspection of God: according to this useful Advice, *I have*, saith David, *set God always before me, therefore I*

* Gen. 17.

*shall not fall**: and what indeed can preserve us from falling so effectually, as the Consideration of God's being always present with us, and taking notice of all our Doings? For, as the Heathen Moralist † observes, great part of the Wickedness of Mankind would be prevented, if, when we were giving way to Temptation, and about to indulge ourselves in Sin, there were any Witnesses to observe our Actions; because there are few so hardned in Sin, but are ashamed to commit it, even in the presence of a Child, that can hardly *discern between good and evil*, that hath neither Understanding enough to censure and condemn their wicked Actions, nor Authority nor Power to inflict Punishment for them: And what is the Presence of a Child, nay of the greatest Monarch upon Earth, in comparison to the Presence of the great God, who seeth and observeth all Things, and hath Power and Will resistless, *to reward every Man according to his doings*. And shall the presence of a Man, *whose Breath is in his Nostrils*, and is little or nothing *to be accounted of*, give a Check to our wanton Passions, and make us affraid or ashamed to indulge them? And shall not the all-piercing Eye of our almighty Judge, deter us from the Commission of Sin? Shall Man, *who can only kill the Body, and not hurt the Soul*, make us affraid

* Psal. 16 † Sen. Epist. 11.

to offend? nay, who without God's Permission, cannot hurt *an hair of our Heads*, make us *stand in awe*, and *sin not*? and shall not the Presence of an omniscient Judge, *who is able to destroy both Body and Soul in Hell*, make us infinitely more affraid to offend him? Shall we presume to *do works of Darkeness*, before him, who is all Light, in whom *there is no Darkeness at all*? shall we dare to sin in his Sight, at whose *Rebuke the Waters flee*, at the *voice of whose Thunder they are affraid*, at whose *look the Earth doth tremble*, and at whose *touch the Hills smoke, and melt away*? No certainly, if we did rightly consider it, we should not, we could not dare to offend the all-seeing Majesty of Heaven.

Fourthly, the Consideration of God's Omniscience would, were it not our own Fault, have a most prevailing Influence, not only towards a good Life in general, but also in an especial manner, it would regulate and animate our Devotion; for it would fashion our Minds after, and preserve them in a divine Frame and Temper, and keep them composed with the most awful Reverence, serious Gravity, and Silence of Spirit, as being ever in the Presence, and under the direct Inspection of the great God; to whom it would teach and dispose us to pray with all Humility and Ferency, both of Body and Soul; and with an humble Confidence of being heard by him, where-

wheresoever we are, or however we deliver our Minds by vocal or mental Prayer: it would oblige us to use great Attention of Spirit, without any Wandring, or impertinent Mixtures of foreign Thoughts, which are never more ready, tho' never so absurd, as then to crowd into our Minds, than when we are at our Devotion.

It would make us sincere without Hypocrisy, and zealous without Affectation to promote the Glory of God, and Welfare of Man; and how acceptable this sweet Disposition of Soul is to him, who *ponders the Hearts, and weigheth the Spirits of Men*, Solomon tells us, for we read, that *such as are upright in their way, are the Lord's delight* *.

Let then the Man, who is like *Nathanael*, who had this Testimony from our Lord, *Behold! an Israelite indeed, in whom is no Guile*, rejoice, that God, who seeth and *desireth Truth in the inward Parts*, is pleased with him: and let him comfort himself with that Saying of the Psalmist, *Blessed is the Man to whom the Lord imputeth no Sin; and in whose Spirit there is no Guile* †.

But let the formal Hypocrite be dismayed; let him fear and tremble, for tho' He may a while by a shew of Piety, conceal the wicked Purposes of his Heart, and perhaps deceive and ruin his unwary Brother, who is no more

* Prov. II. 20. † Psal. 32. 2.

able to see the Impostor through his sanctified Disguise, than willing to believe it, 'till too late Experience makes him sensible of it; yet, let him know, that the Falshood and Rottenness of his Heart, *is naked and opened to the Eyes of God*, who will reward him according to the Fruit thereof.

Let those, who allow and indulge themselves in any secret Sins, which the Eyes of Man cannot reach, and all those, who endeavour to palliate their Sins with artful Distinctions, as Adam did to cover his Guilt *with Fig-leaves*; let them know, that the Eyes of the Lord pierce into the inmost Recesses of the Soul, and *will bring to Light the hidden things of Darkeness, and will one Day judge the secrets of Men by Jesus Christ*.

In a word, let all insincere Professors of Christianity consider, that by their Hypocrisy they affront the Truth of God, because they treat him, as if He could be pleased with Lies; and affront his Omniscience, because they behave, as if He were no better than the *Idols of the Heathen, who have Ears, and hear not; Eyes, and see not*: but let them timely consider, that they may repent of their great Folly and Sin, lest their final *Portion* be that of *Liars, viz. the Lake that burneth with Fire and Brimstone for ever*.

But let all faithful and sincere Christians, whether their Innocence be traduced and vi-

lified by false and malicious Tongues, be comforted, for God knoweth the Integrity of their Hearts, and will either in this Life *make their Righteousness as clear as the noon Day*; or in the next, vindicate their Innocence and reward it with Glory, to the eternal Shame and Confusion of their false Accusers.

In a word, whether they labour under Poverty or Sicknes, or any other Trouble or Distress, the Consideration of a gracious and all-seeing God must cheer and support them under it. For if we bear with Resignation to his holy Will, those Evils with which our heavenly Father visits us, to try our Patience, and that our Faith may be praise worthy in the Day of the Lord, *if we cry unto him, He will either deliver us out of our Distress, or else make our light Afflictions here, work for us an exceeding and eternal weight of Glory with himself in Heaven.*

The Justice of God.

S E R M O N V.

R E V. XV. 3. latter part.

Just and true are thy Ways, Thou King of Saints.

THE whole Verse runs thus, *And they sing*, (viz. those who had gotten the Victory over the Beast, and over his Image) *the Song of Moses, the Servant of God: and the Song of the Lamb; saying, Great and marvellous are thy Works, Lord, God Almighty; just and true are thy Ways, Thou King of Saints.* This Part of the Song, which relates to that holy and tremendous Attribute of the Deity, his Justice, express'd in these words, *just and true are thy Ways*, I have made choice of for the Subject of the following Discourse, in which I shall endeavour to shew,

- I. *First*, what we are to understand by the Justice of God,
- II. *Secondly*, to demonstrate that this Attribute of Justice doth essentially belong to God. And
- III. *Thirdly*, what Influence the Consideration of this Attribute ought to have upon our Faith and Practice.

First, then I am to shew, what we are to understand by the Justice of God, or wherein it doth consist. The word Justice, as applied to God in Scripture, sometimes denotes the divine Beneficence, thus saith Samuel to the People, *Stand still that I may reason with you of all the righteous Acts of the Lord, which He did to you, and to your Fathers* *; and sometimes it denotes the most consummate Rectitude of his Nature, thus saith Moses, *I will publish the Name of the Lord, He is the Rock, his Work is perfect; for all his Ways are Judgment; a God of Truth, and without Iniquity; just and right is He* †.

In this Sense the divine Justice coincides with the divine Sanctity, and is by the Schoolmen stiled the universal Justice of God, which they distinguish from the particular Justice of God; inasmuch as the former denotes the absolute Rectitude and immaculate Purity of

* 1 Sam. 12. 7. † Deut. 32. 3, 4.

his Nature; whereas the latter strictly bears a Relation to something else: for God is therefore properly called just, because He neither will, or can do any Thing, with regard to other Beings, but what is suitable to their Nature, and to his own Perfection.

That we may therefore more distinctly proceed, we must enquire, with all due Submission to the Majesty of God, how far his Right extends itself over his Creatures: for thence it will appear, how God, with regard to them, deals justly and righteously, or, which is the same thing, suitably to their Nature, and his own Perfections.

Now the Right of God over his Creatures, is that supreme Dominion and Authority over them, whereby He is stiled the absolute Lord and Proprietor of all Things, and consequently can use, or dispose of, them according to his Pleasure, directed by his own infinite Goodness and Wisdom.

But this universal Right is diversified, and seems to be qualified, according to the great Variety of Creatures, and as they are distinguish'd from each other.

For since God hath given to some of these no more than bare Existence, as to Stones, to Gold and Silver; and to others, besides Existence, Life, but such as is void of all Sensation, as to Plants and Trees: God's Right with respect to these is without Limitation,
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He may alter or change, destroy or annihilate them at his absolute Will and Pleasure; because these Creatures are incapable of suffering any Injury.

But since, besides these, there are other Creatures, whom God hath endued with Life and Sensation, as the brute Beasts, and others also whom He hath endued, not only with Life and Sensation, but also with Reason, as Men; consequently so far as Men and Brutes have Life and Sensation common to them, so far they are capable of receiving Injury, and therefore, in this Case, the Right of God over them seems to admit of some Limitation: for the Justice of God requires, that He should treat them agreeably to their Natures.

Wherefore since God hath created them capable of Pleasure and Pain, He therefore seems thereby to have placed some Bounds to his own Power. God hath indeed an absolute Right to deprive them of all Sense, or even of their Existence, because He doubtless may resume what was freely his own Gift; and if He is pleased to continue their Existence and Sensation, He may encrease or diminish their Sense of Pleasure to what Degree his Wisdom shall prescribe: but as to their Sense of Pain, the Right of God seems to admit of some Restraint, (viz.) that He should not inflict such Pain upon them, as
 should

should be more than an Equivalent to the Benefit of their Creation.

Whence it follows, that if we consider Man in a State of Innocence, in which he was at his first Creation, and in which infant Children now are, who are wash'd from original Corruption in the Laver of Regeneration, that God hath no Right to will, or to do any thing repugnant to their Condition, or to the Dignity of his own Nature : because God can neither acquire Glory, or take Pleasure in the Misery of innocent Men ; much less in their eternal Misery : because it is inconsistent with Wisdom and Goodness, to seek for Glory, or to take Pleasure in Acts of Cruelty ; for these are only fit for the Diversion of inhuman Tyrants, or to be the Sport of Devils : and likewise because it is repugnant to the Condition of Man considered as innocent ; for instead of Misery, an intire freedom from it, is due to Innocence ; for it is far better not to be, than to be truly and eternally miserable, and the Creation of such a Sufferer, instead of being a Blessing, will prove the greatest Curse.

From hence we may infer, how much beneath the Dignity of Man's Reason, and the Goodness of God, the horrid Opinion of those Men must needs be, who unwarrantably affirm, that God hath ordained and predestinated from all Eternity, the far greatest

Part of Mankind to eternal Torments, without any Condition, or Prevision, of any avoidable Fault or Sin of theirs, by an absolute Decree of his own Will.

For what more cruel and horrid Sentence could ever have been conceived than this? for hereby the greatest Evil is ordain'd from all Eternity against Millions of rational Creatures, which is not only not due to them, but is evidently unequal and disproportionate to their Condition, that is to say, their Innocence. For what could God do less to promote the Glory of his Name, or more to fix eternal Reproach and Ignominy thereon, than to display his Justice by the severest Tyranny? and demonstrate the Glory of his absolute Dominion, and Power of his free Will, by the everlasting Pain and Torments of his innocent Creatures? This surely is the utmost Height of Cruelty and Injustice imaginable.

This Conclusion seems to be necessarily drawn from the universal Justice of God, or the eternal Sanctity of his Nature.

But it is objected, that God may, without any Violation of his Justice, inflict Pain upon an innocent Creature for some Time, and that He may therefore for a longer Time, and consequently for ever: for if He may justly do it for two or three Hours, why not for as many more, and so on to all Eternity?

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The Sophistry of this Argument is easily seen through and refuted; for tho' we own, that God hath an undoubted Right to inflict Pain even upon an innocent Creature, so far as that Pain doth not exceed the Benefit, or overballance the Good which accrues to it from its Creation: yet, if that Evil of Pain shall exceed that Good, we have no Reason to acknowledge any such Right in God, because it is no less inconsistent with his Perfections, than unsuitable to the Condition of the Creature.

Hitherto we have considered, how far the Right of God may extend itself with regard to Man considered in a State of Innocence.

But since there are none of all *the Sons and Daughters of Adam*, but what are Sinners; for the purest Saint on Earth, as well as the vilest Transgressor, must own with St John, *That if we say, we have no Sin, we deceive our selves, and the Truth is not in us.*

Therefore I shall proceed to consider the Right of God, with regard to Man as a Sinner, as acting against the Dictates of his Reason, either under the Law of Nature, or under the Law of Moses, or under the Law of Christ; and since the Law of Nature is a Rule more obscure than the Law of Moses, and both of them more obscure than the Law of Christ, therefore the divine Right seems to admit of various Limitations, according to
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the different Quality and Quantity of the Transgression, which is more or less heinous according to the greater or lesser Light and Conviction, against which it is committed.

But then those Limitations must be such as God's infinite Mercy directed by his unerring Wisdom shall prescribe.

And yet such is the odious Nature of every wilful Sin, that God may, without any Injury to the Offender, were *he extreme to mark what is done amiss*, justly punish it with Death, for *the wages of Sin is Death*.

And tho' God be most holy in himself, yet He may, as a wise Governour of the World, justly suffer Man, whom He has endued with Reason and Liberty of Will, to commit Sin; but He cannot without Injury to Man, and Violence to his own Sanctity, perswade or compel him, by any moral or physical Act or Impulse, to the Commission of it.

Which leads me yet in a more restrained Sense to consider the particular Justice of God, whereby He is related to the whole Race of sinful Men, not only as their Sovereign Lord, but as a most righteous Judge of all their Actions.

We must observe further, that this particular Justice of this great Lord and Judge is not communicative, for as Job saith, *can a Man be profitable to God?* or as S. Paul saith, *who hath first given to him, and it shall be*

recom-

recompensed to him again? but distributive, which consists in a constant Will to reward or punish every Man according to the Fruit of his doings: agreeably to what the Apostle saith to the Romans, God will render to every Man according to his Deeds: to them, who by patient Continuance in well-doing, seek for Glory, and Honour, and Immortality, eternal Life: but to them, that are contentious, and obey not the Truth, but obey Unrighteousness, Indignation and Wrath, Tribulation and Anguish, upon every Soul of Man that doth Evil,*

But so great is the Imperfection of the best of Men and their Services, that God confers Rewards upon them, not on Account of their own, but of the imputed Merits of Christ; and therefore this Act of divine Justice, which relates to the Works of good Men, is rather by way of Analogy, than propriety term'd *Distributive*.

Wherefore our present Enquiry solely and properly relates to the vindictive Justice of God, so that the Question is, whether God be necessarily obliged to punish Sinners or not? or whether He may not, or can not remit the Punishment of Sin, and that without some Satisfaction made to his offended Majesty, without a Violation of his Justice.

For, tho' it is agreed by all, that God will most certainly give those good Things, which

* Chap. 2.

He hath promised to those that love and obey him, because *He is just and faithful that hath promised.* For hath He said, and shall He not do it? Hath He spoken, and shall He not make it good? Shall not the Judge of all the Earth do right?

But Men are not so unanimous in their Opinion concerning the vindictive Justice of God: for many will not believe, that God is equally obliged to punish Sinners, as He is to confer Rewards upon his Saints. For in this Case, say they, God is the Creditor, and the Sinner is the Debtor, and consequently He may, consistent with his Justice, remit the Debt of Punishment to the Sinner, because there is no Injury done either to Debtor or Creditor.

But to this we reply, that since God hath declared, that He will punish impenitent Sinners, He cannot, tho' He be the Creditor, and Sinners the Debtors, remit the Debt of Punishment, without a Violation of his Veracity: He is *a God of Truth*, and therefore He will not, He cannot *lie*.

Vindictive Justice is therefore necessary to God, because He hath declared, that He will take Vengeance of incorrigible Sinners, and that it is not only necessary on Account of his Threatnings, but also essential to the Sanctity of his Nature, will appear

First, if we compare the Nature of Justice with the Nature of God. Now Justice bears the same Relation to the moral World, as Order and Proportion do to the Natural: for it assigns to each rational Creature his proper Place or Station, according to its Deserts: and therefore since Order and Proportion, visible throughout the whole Universe, and every Part thereof, are not only allowed to proceed originally from God, but also to exist in him after a manner infinitely more perfect: why should not Justice, on which all Order and Proportion in the moral World depend, exist also in the same most perfect Cause in the like infinite Degree? For the Reason is the same in both, because there can be no Beauty or Perfection, which can derive its Origin from any other Being, beside the first Cause; or which is not necessarily and essentially united, in the most eminent way, to that most perfect Being.

But tho' Order and Proportion are very conspicuous in the natural World, may it not be objected, that there are only faint Shadows thereof in the moral? for do we not frequently see Wickedness triumphant, and neglected Vertue miserably depressed? To this we reply, that it is not always so, for sometimes we see Vertue adorn'd with Honour and Glory, and Wickedness labouring under the just Shame and Punishment which is due to it.

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However it be, from the unequal Distribution of Things here, all that we can justly infer is, that there will surely *come a Day; wherein God will judge the World in Righteousness.*

Nevertheless since the present Beauty of the natural World doth consist in its Order and Proportion; there also may be, for ought we know, the like Beauty arising from the same Principles in the moral: for as God strictly observed this Rule in the Formation of the former, having made every Thing in *Number, Weight, and Measure*: so 'tis highly credible, that even now He observes the same Laws in the Government of the latter: tho' the one is more evident to us, than the other, which must be for this Reason, because it is not in our Power to judge so well of the moral, as it is of the natural Geometry of God: because this is a glorious Scene of sensible Things expos'd to our View; whereas that lies hidden and conceal'd from our Sight, in the dubious, intricate and puzzling Meanders of the Heart, which, as the Prophet saith, *is deceitful above all Things.*

And this Argument may be thus further confirm'd; Order and Proportion are in themselves lovely and aimable; and therefore, as such, not to be rejected; for if so, it must be for the sake of some greater good to be obtain'd: if for the sake of some greater
good,

good, that must be, either the private good of him that rejects it, or the publick good, or the private good of some other Being: but it can be neither of these; not the private good of him that rejects it; because He is here supposed to be an infinitely perfect Being, and therefore incapable of receiving any adventitious Benefit: nor the publick good, for this consists in, and therefore is to be preserved by Order and Proportion: much less therefore are these to be rejected for the sake of the private good of any other Being; because Order and Proportion being a publick Benefit, they are to be preferred far before the private good of any other Being, and therefore are not to be violated; and consequently 'tis necessary, that God should observe them, in all his Works and Dispensations, or which is the same in other Words, that God should be just; and consequently that He is obliged, as hath been before observed, not to punish the innocent, but only guilty *impenitent Sinners*.

For can any Thing be more repugnant to Order and Proportion, than to punish the innocent, or to suffer impenitent Sinners to escape free: therefore if God should act contrary thereto, He must violate the Rectitude of his own Nature, and contradict himself. Since therefore God is the great Fountain of all Order and Proportion, He seems obliged,

liged, not so much by the Determination of his own free Will, as by the Necessity of his own Nature, to punish impenitent Sinners.

Secondly, vindictive Justice is necessary and essential to God, because we have great Reason to believe, that God neither would nor could have forgiven Sin, unless there had been a full and plenary Satisfaction and Compensation made to him for it. For since God had not only declared, but Mankind, as it were, naturally believed, *that without Shedding of Blood there could be no Remission of Sin*: a Sacrifice was necessary to be offered for the Sinner, whereby God's Wrath might be appeased, and his Love obtain'd.

And since it was no less necessary, that that Sacrifice should be pure, spotless, and of infinite Value, to atone the infinite Justice of God, for the infinite Malignity of Sin; it follows, that no such Sacrifice could have been found among all the Variety of Creatures that are: for whatever any Creature could have done or suffered, would have been no more than Duty, or just Punishment; therefore, if Christ, who is God as well as Man, had not offered himself for us, Sin had not been pardon'd, and if not pardoned, it would most certainly have been punish'd, and if so, that Punishment would have been the necessary Effect of God's vindictive Justice: or else the Sinners Soul must have been annihilated,

lated, or his Guilt for ever have went unpunished; which is repugnant to Reason, as well as Revelation.

For 'tis evident in fact, that God would by no means remit Sin, without such a valuable Satisfaction; and therefore it is highly credible, that he could not remit it, without that Satisfaction, because inconsistent with the Sanctity of his Justice.

For if it depended solely on the free Will of God to punish, or not punish Sin; if He could have pardon'd Sin without any Satisfaction; how came the God of all Mercy to expose his own immaculate *Lamb* to rapacious *Wolves*? was it consistent with his infinite Goodness, to send his beloved Son into the World, in whom He was well pleased, to suffer so many vile Indignities, and at length deliver him to the painful and ignominious Death of the Cross, for the sake of us miserable Sinners? why did it not please his infinite Wisdom to contrive some other Method of Redemption, which should cost no such terrible Wounds, nor the Effusion of such precious Blood?

If our Redemption did solely depend upon the free Will of God, why would not the *Blood of Bulls and of Goats, and the Ashes of an Heifer, sprinkling the unclean, satisfy to the purifying of the Spirit, as well as of the Flesh*? Why must the Blood of Christ be needs required

to appease the offended Majesty of God? What, could the pungent Pains, and bloody Agonies; the extreme Tortures of his Body, and the inexpressible Horrors of his Soul, be grateful to *the Father of Mercies*, who hath declared, that *He hath no pleasure in the Death of the Wicked*, and much less then in the Death of his innocent Son, had there been no Necessity for it?

But further, were there no other Motive to God, beside the Determination of his own free Will, to sacrifice his Son, why did not that God, *who proclaims himself the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long suffering and abundant in Goodness and Truth*, hear with pity and compassion his dear Son crying out in his painful Agonies upon the Cross, *My Father, if it be possible, let this Cup pass from me.*

Since therefore that deadly *Cup*, full of divine Fury, did not *pass from him*, we have reason to conclude, that it was necessary for him to drink largely thereof, because otherwise God would not have forgiven the Sins of Men; and consequently that vindictive Justice is necessary and essential to the divine Nature. Which Truth is

Thirdly, confirm'd by the Testimony of our own Conscience; for Conscience brings every Man to the Bar of Justice, before God's Tribunal, and either accuses him of, and condemns

demns him for, Sin committed, or approves of and applauds him for the good Things which he hath done: Nor can the Light of Conscience be quite extinguish'd, nor its Charge eluded, nor its Evidence corrupted; nor is there any Sin so hidden or secret, nor any Sinner so high and mighty, but Conscience *will find him out*, lay hold of, and chastise him for it.

Now whence come these direful Lashes, and amazing Horrors of Conscience for the Guilt of Sin, but from a natural Sense of that almighty Judge, whose Presence, tho' invisible to our bodily Eye, is yet apparent to the Eye of Faith, and of our own Reason.

And that the Dictates of Conscience are universal, appears further from the Sacrifices which the Heathen offered to their Gods to appease their Indignation; and by their Custom of Swearing by them, as oft as they had occasion to invoke the Gods as Witnesses and Judges of their Actions: for this plainly shews, that they believed their Gods to be strenuous Asserters of the Truth, and severe Avengers of all Falshood and Wrong.

Finally that vindictive Justice is necessary and essential to God, may appear from the necessary Hatred which He must bear to Sin: for if God cannot but love himself, because there is nothing in himself, but what is truly aimable; He must of necessity hate Sin, be-

cause it is most opposite to the Sanctity of his Nature; for *Sin is a Transgression of his holy Law*, and the exprefs Image, and impure Issue of that arch Traytor the Devil, the Author of it. Wherefore the most holy God, *who is of purer Eyes than to behold Iniquity*, must of necessity hate Sin, and consequently punish it.

For tho' we frail Creatures may entertain an Aversion against a Sinner without punishing him for being so; because we may have neither Power nor Authority to do it: yet since neither of these can be wanting to the sovereign Ruler and Judge of the World, it must be necessary for him to express his Displeasure against Sin, which He so much hates, by some Punishment suitable to it. Wherefore from this and the preceding Arguments we conclude, that vindictive Justice is necessary and essential to God.

But tho' it be granted, that vindictive Justice is necessary and essential to God: is it necessary, that his *Wrath should burn like Fire* against Sinners for ever? is it consistent with Equity, that the Errors of a short Life, prone to Evil, should be punished with eternal Torments? with *a Worm that never dies, and a Fire that never shall be quenched*? For if this be the Case, what Proportion is there, between a momentary Sin, and an eternal Punishment? if the least Sins, not repented of, are

are justly punish'd with eternal Torments; what will the most enormous Sins deserve? can there be any greater, than infinite Torments for the greatest Sins? or, are all Sins to be accounted equal?

With such like cavilling Reasons as these, do some Men dispute against the Testimony of God's Word, which expressly asserts, that all impenitent Sinners *shall go into everlasting Punishment, but the Righteous into life eternal.* We may assure ourselves, that how difficult soever it may seem to us, to reconcile the eternal Punishments of the Damn'd to our Reason and God's Perfections; we shall hereafter see, with regard to good Men, *the Salvation of God*; and have reason to say, with respect to the Wicked, *that righteous art Thou, O Lord, and true in all thy Judgments.*

For the present then let us rest satisfied, about the future State of impenitent Sinners, with what Antoninus the Roman Emperor and Philosopher doubtfully said, with regard to the future State of good Men, whether by Death they should be extinguish'd or not; if it be just, says he, you may be sure it is so; if it be not just, you may certainly conclude the contrary: for God is just, and being so, He will do nothing that is unjust, or unreasonable.

I proceed now in the last place briefly to shew, what Influence the Consideration of this
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this Attribute ought to have upon our Faith and Practice. And

First, if God be just, we ought to believe and acknowledge him to be so in all the Dispensations of his Providence, however hidden they may be from, or repugnant to, our short sighted Understanding: if therefore God should lift the Poor out of the Mire, and set him with Princes, even with the Princes of his People; or lay the Honour of Princes in the Dust. If He should make our Corn, and Wine, and Oil encrease; or reduce us to Poverty and Distress; we must say with old Eli, *it is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him Good*: for what seemeth Good to him, is, and must be, just to us.

Secondly, if God be just, let us then fear to offend him, and that not only in our outward Actions, but also in our Thoughts: for *He knoweth our down-sitting and up-rising, He understandeth all our Thoughts: He is about our Path, and about our Bed, and spieth out all our Ways*: if therefore we wilfully offend him, we provoke his Justice to vindicate his Honour, and chastise our Folly. Nor is there any Way to escape the Fury of his Vengeance, but by unfeigned Repentance thro' the Merits of Christ, who is our *Propitiation*.

Thirdly, if God be just, let us dare to serve, and worship him in Spirit and in Truth, in-
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spite of all the Frowns or Smiles of this World, which should endeavour to affright us from, or entice us to abandon, our Duty. *Let the Heathen furiously rage, and the People imagine a vain thing: Let the Kings of the Earth stand up, and the Princes take counsel together against the Lord, and against his anointed.*

But let us put our trust in him, for the God whom we serve is able to deliver us. He that dwelleth in Heaven shall laugh them to scorn; the Lord shall have them in derision: He shall speak to them in his wrath, and vex them in his sore displeasure; but He will set all his faithful Servants, as He hath our blessed Lord and King, upon his holy Hill of Zion.

Finally, if God be just, let us endeavour to be just in all our Ways, as He is just: let us pay to God that Love and Obedience which are due to him; and in our Dealings, what is just and due to Men. And so shall we in some measure fulfil that golden Rule of Equity, which God and Nature prescribe to our Practice, *whatsoever ye would that Men should do unto you, do ye even so unto them, for this is the Law and the Prophets*; and have reason to expect a favourable Sentence at the last Day, from our just eternal Judge, for the sake of Christ, because He hath assured us, *that with what Measure we mete unto others, it shall be measured to us again.*

The Goodness of God.

S E R M O N VI.

P S A L M CXIX. 68.

Thou art good, and Thou dost good.

THE Goodness of the Lord was the dayly Subject, and delightful Theme of David's Psalms, *It is, saith he, a good Thing to give Thanks unto the Lord, and to sing Praises unto thy Name, O Thou most High, to tell of thy loving Kindness early in the Morning, and of thy Truth in the night Season: for Thou Lord hast made me glad thro' thy Works, and I will rejoyce in giving Praise for the Operations of thy Hands.*

And what was his beloved Song here on Earth, is now the triumphant and eternal Theme, with Angels and Archangels, of his Halleluiahs in Heaven. For these all standing before the Throne of God, *Sing, Blessing, and Glory,*

Glory, and Wisdom, and Thanksgiving, and Honour, and Power, and Might to his holy Name for ever and ever. They continually see and taste how gracious the Lord is, and therefore, as it well becometh the just to be thankful, they continually celebrate his Goodness, and without ceasing joyfully pay the Tribute of their Praise.

We therefore, who are Members of the Church Militant, should join with them in shewing forth the loving Kindness of the Lord, that we may for ever taste of, and celebrate, his Goodness with that Church Triumphant in Heaven; for it is now, and will hereafter be the Duty and Happiness of glorified Saints to dwell for ever on this delightful Theme, (*viz.*) *Thou art good, and Thou doest good.* In speaking to which Words I shall endeavour to shew,

- I. *First*, what we are to understand by the divine Goodness, or wherein it doth consist.
- II. *Secondly*, to demonstrate, that Goodness belongeth essentially to God.
- III. *Thirdly*, to point out some Instances, wherein God is pleased to manifest his Goodness: and,
- IV. *Lastly*, shew what Influence the Consideration of this Attribute ought to have upon our Faith and Practice.

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First,

First, I am to shew, what we are to understand by the Goodness of God, or wherein it doth consist.

The word Goodness is taken in various Senses, and in divers Respects ascribed unto God; sometimes it signifies the absolute Perfection of God, denoting, that He is of himself, in himself, originally, consummately, and immutably good.

Sometimes the word Goodness is opposed to all moral Turpitude or Imperfection whatsoever, in which sense it denotes, that the Nature of God is most holy, pure, and immaculate; in both these acceptations, we are to understand those words of our Saviour, *There is none good, but One, that is God.*

Goodness is also elsewhere taken in a more limited and restrained Sense, for a most ardent Propensity of the divine Nature to do good to his Creatures, and to promote their Happiness; in this acceptation it is opposed to Envy and Malice, which delight in doing Injury to others, or in unjustly denying or withholding Things necessary or convenient for them; and in this last relative sense it is to be understood in my Text, (*viz.*) *Thou art good, and Thou dost good*; so that it signifies the same thing as Beneficence or Kindness, it being the Nature of what is good to be communicative of itself.

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From these various Acceptations of Goodness, it will be easy to distinguish those different Attributes, which seem in some respects to be so near of Kin to it, as to be taken for, or confounded with it; such as are the divine Love, and Sanctity; Grace, and Mercy.

The Sanctity of God is the absolute Rectitude of his Nature, which clearly shines and displays its Beauty in the holy Precepts of the Law and Gospel, which the more heartily we obey, the more fully we resemble the divine Sanctity; and expose the Image of it to the View and Imitation of others. But the divine Goodness doth more widely diffuse itself, for it denotes not only the absolute Rectitude of God's Nature, but also the gracious Emanation of his Will, reaching out, and freely bestowing its Riches to all and every Creature, according to that of the Psalmist, *The Lord is good to all, and his tender Mercies are over all his Works.*

From the divine Goodness flows the divine Love, from which the divine Goodness is distinguished, as a Cause is from its Effect: for we must conceive Things to have been first made by the divine Power, moved by ineffable Goodness, before we can conceive them to be the Objects of the divine Love.

By the Grace of God is meant, sometimes his universal Benevolence, which shews itself

in freely bestowing his Favours upon us, without any Merit on our Side, or Obligation on his; and sometimes it more especially signifies the Gifts of the holy Spirit, in the like manner freely communicated to us by God: in the former Sense it coincides with the divine Love, and therefore is distinguish'd in the same manner from God's Goodness, as his Love is: in the latter sense, it is of a more contracted Signification, for it is not extended to all Men, but is appropriated only to those, who, being admitted into the new Covenant by the Sacrament of Baptism, are thought meet to be Partakers of the Gifts of the holy Ghost.

And as for the divine Mercy, that may be distinguish'd from the Goodness of God on account of its Object; for the Creature as such is the Object of the divine Goodness, but the Creature as miserable is the Object of the divine Mercy.

From hence we may infer, that God's Goodness is neither the Sanctity of his Nature, nor his Love; neither his Grace, nor Mercy; but an Affection that comprehends, in its Idea, all those gracious Attributes, of whose benign Influences the Creature is capable of partaking.

Which, that it belongs essentially unto God, I proceed according to my *Second Particular* to demonstrate: and *First,*

First, this will appear from the very Idea or Notion of a God, which, according to our Conceptions, and his own Declaration, is, *Deus optimus, maximus*, the best and greatest of all Beings, a Being infinitely perfect. Since therefore Goodness is the best and noblest of all Perfections, (for without it, what would his Power be, but a mad and brutal Force? what his Wisdom, but Folly? what his Knowledge, but Vanity? or the whole Complex of God's Attributes, but Oppression and Cruelty?) it must necessarily be involved among the Perfections of God.

Nay, not only Goodness, but all possible Degrees of Goodness, infinite Goodness must belong unto him: for since we acknowledge God to be infinite in Power and Wisdom, we must also acknowledge him to be infinite in Goodness; for if He were not so, it must be, because He could not, or would not have infinite Goodness: but if He could not have it, where then would be his infinite Power? and if He would not have it, where would be his infinite Wisdom? God therefore, on account of his all perfect Essence, is properly and only said to be necessarily and essentially good: whereas all other Things, how good soever they may be stiled, because they are made according to the holy Will of God, yet they are only good by Participation: it is God alone that is eternally,

nally, immutably, and independently good of himself.

But can Goodness be essential to God? is it not a Perfection relative to the Creature? How then could it have any Place among the Attributes of God, before any Creature did exist to partake of its Influence? and if it be only coeval with the Creature, how can it be essential to the divine Nature? This Objection will easily be removed, if we distinguish Goodness into its Principle, and into the Exercise thereof. When we say God is essentially good, we mean that God hath, from all Eternity, the Principle of Goodness in himself; but as to the external Acts or Exercise of that Goodness, this must be acknowledg'd to begin and end with the Creature.

But farther, since God is essentially good, his Goodness and Essence must be inseparable, so that God may as soon cease to be God, as cease to be good in himself.

And because all Composition of Parts implies a mutual Dependency of one Part upon another, and consequently so far Imperfection; therefore God being infinitely perfect, can admit of no Composition; and therefore his Goodness, and all other his Attributes must be identified with his Essence, and consequently He is not so properly stiled good, as Goodness itself.

And

And as God is thus necessarily good in himself, so likewise is He necessarily good in all the Operations of his Hands; not that He acts by a fatal Necessity, as the Stoicks idly dream'd, for all his Works are the gracious Effects of his free Will and Pleasure: but that when He had decreed to create the World, He could not but create it good and perfect. Accordingly we find the Wisdom of God pronounced of all his Creatures, that *He had made, that they were good*; for how indeed could it have been otherwise, since every Thing that was made, was made conformable to the divine Understanding and Will, which are the sole infallible Rule and Standard of all Truth and Goodness.

Since God therefore, through the Impulse of his Goodness, was determin'd to produce the World; the same Goodness necessarily determin'd him to make the Whole, and every Part thereof, compleat and good; wherefore how consistent soever it may be with infinite Power, it is utterly inconsistent with infinite Goodness, to create a miserable Creature: for as it is absurd that God should be subject to any natural Evil, so it is no less absurd, that He should be subject to any moral Imperfection, such as are Injustice and Cruelty: wherefore there is a necessary Connexion between the Goodness and Essence of God: God therefore is necessarily good,

Nor

Nor are the severe Punishments, which God inflicts upon impenitent Sinners, any Objection against his Goodness: for his Goodness must be consistent with all his Attributes, and therefore with his Justice; for *shall not the Judge of all the Earth do right?* or shall one Attribute be contrary to another; if so, where then would be the Happiness and Perfection of God?

Had Men or Angels never sinn'd, they had not ceased to have been the Objects of his Goodness; but having fallen from their original Righteousness and Holiness, regardless of God's Goodness, and their own Happiness, they rendered themselves unworthy of his loving Kindness; nay, so much the more unworthy, as their ungrateful Offence was committed against the greatest Goodness: it cannot then be an Objection against God's Goodness, that He sometimes draws his Sword of Justice against incorrigible Sinners; for He thereby asserts that Glory to his Justice, which those vile Rebels deny to his Goodness.

Another Argument to demonstrate the Goodness of God, may be taken from all the Signs of Goodness, that are visible in all the Ranks of Beings, and each Individual; for whatever Beauty or wholesome Influence appears from those luminous Bodies, which shine in the Firmament of Heaven, or displays

plays itself in those, which move upon the Face of the Earth, or swim in the great Deep, are the rich Emanations which stream from the inexhaustible Fountain of all Goodness; and therefore Goodness must be ascribed to God infinitely above what can be seen in the most excellent Creature: for whatever Perfection is in the Effect, must either formally or eminently, that is, either under the same likeness, or in a much more excellent Way preexist in the first infinite Cause.

And therefore, as the Apostle saith, *The invisible Things of him from the Creation of the World, are clearly seen, being understood by the Things that are made, even his eternal Power and Godhead*; so likewise from the Goodness of the same visible Things, may we justly infer the most consummate Goodness of the Creator; and that all the Goodness, visible in the great Variety of Creatures, is but a faint Image or Shadow of that transcendent Goodness, which is in God; which reminds me of my

Second Particular, which is to point out some Instances, wherein God is pleased to manifest his Goodness. Now these Instances are clearly seen in the Works of the Creation; in God's providential Care of them; but above all, in the mysterious Work of our Redemption.

As to the First of these, the divine Goodness is clearly seen in the Works of the Creation; for as the beautiful Harmony of the Works of God, visible throughout the Whole, and every Part of the Universe, demonstrate his Existence, together with his infinite Wisdom and Power; so do the excellent Qualities, which adorn the Diversity of Creatures, and by which they are subservient to the Welfare of each other, shew forth the immense Riches of the divine Goodness: for among all the great Variety of Creatures, there is nothing but what proclaims the Goodness, as well as Glory of the Creator.

If we cast our Eyes up to Heaven, the Constancy and Regularity in which those vast Bodies, the Sun, Moon, and Stars, perform their rapid Motions; the certain and convenient Vicissitude of Seasons which they make, will give us cause sufficient to admire, and adore that transcendent Goodness and Wisdom, which first formed them, and disposed them into that beautiful State and Order, wherein we see them; and which, without any sensible Variation or Change, either of Magnitude or Figure, Situation or Distance from each other, they continue to retain, and by the kindly Influences of their Light and Heat, conduce to the general Preservation and Comfort of all Things here below.

And

And if we survey this Globe of Earth whereon we dwell, we shall find, that God hath so wisely and graciously fashioned all Things about us, as to render them useful and convenient for us: the Earth, at proper Seasons, is spread all over, like a Table well furnished with great Variety of delicate Fruits, Herbs, and Grains, to nourish our Bodies, gratify our Senses, to cheer our Spirits, and cure those Diseases that may befall us.

Even the barren Mountains send down fresh Streams of Water, necessary to support our Lives, useful to enrich and make fruitful the Valleys beneath; and convenient for maintaining Intercourse and Commerce among us: nor are the wide Seas altogether unprofitable Wastes; they transmit our Traffick, furnish us with delicate Entertainments, and supply the Heavens with Waters to refresh the Earth, being the inexhaustible Source from whence our Fountains and Rivers are derived, and into which they flow: nay, even the rough and stormy Winds are useful and serviceable, for they cleanse and purify the Air for our Health, and *scatter and spread abroad* the Clouds, those *Paths of God*, which drop Fateness upon our Fields and Pastures.

And as for those inferior Creatures, which are endued with Life, what manifold Blessings we receive from them; how many ways they supply our Necessities, ease our Labours, and

promote our Diversions, affording ut delightful Food, and convenient Cloathing, is not possible for us, by Words, or Numbers, to express.

But we need not go out of ourselves to find Instances of God's Goodness: the Formation of Man will supply us with an abundant Proof thereof; for the blessed Trinity seems, in a peculiar manner, to have deliberated about his Creation: *God said, Let us make Man in our Image, after our Likeness:* and accordingly we see many lively Traces of his Goodness deeply imprest upon the Body and Soul of Man: the first indeed God formed out of the Dust of the Earth, but yet He built that House of Clay with such wonderful Artifice, so aptly disposed every Part of it, adapting each of them to all the several Uses of Life, and adorned the whole with such a comely Shape, and elegant Figure, that we cannot but admire and praise the Goodness of God, who framed so suitable and beautiful a Tenement, for the rational Soul to reside in: which Particle of the Divinity is not only endued with the noble Faculty of Understanding and freedom of Will, but, being immortal like the great *Father of Spirits*, who created it, is not subject to decay, but can safely bid defiance to the armed Fury of the most powerful Tyrant, and stand unhurt amidst the Crush of falling Worlds.

By

By this godlike Principle Societies are formed, Cities ruled, and Empires sustained; to this is to be ascribed the Invention and Improvement of Arts, and Sciences; 'tis this that leads us into the Knowledge of God, and our Duty towards him; 'tis this that makes us capable of seeing God here, and of enjoying him for ever hereafter: so that we have reason to say with the Psalmist, *O Lord our Governour, how excellent is thy Name in all the World, who hast set thy Glory above the Heavens! Thou hast made Man little lower than the Angels, and hast crown'd him with Glory and Honour; Thou madest him to have dominion over the Works of thine Hands; Thou hast put all things under his Feet; the Beast of the Field, the Fowl of the Air, the Fish of the Sea, and whatsoever passeth through the Paths of the Seas, O Lord our Governour, how excellent is thy Name!*

And as God's Goodness is visible in the Works of the Creation; so likewise is it in the gracious Acts of his Providence. The same Goodness which produced, doth now support the World, for the Glory of God, and the Welfare of Man. *God knoweth the Ordinances of Heaven, and setteth the Dominion thereof upon the Earth.*

He doth not confine himself, as Epicurus vainly imagined, within the Boundaries of Heaven, but graciously displayeth his providential

dential Care over Earth and Seas. *The Earth is full of thy Riches, saith the Psalmist, so is the great and wide Sea, wherein are Things creeping innumerable, both small and great Beasts: all Things wait on Thee, that Thou mayest give them their Meat in due Season: Thou openest thy Hand, and they are filled with good.*

And could we see how God, in a peculiar manner with regard to us, doth so dispose of the Events and Issues of Things, as to shield and protect us from that which would be hurtful; or else, even out of those Evils, which He permitteth us to endure, worketh out for us some important good: could we see the various Turns and Windings, the Schemes and Contrivances, Providence makes use of for our Preservation, thro' all the different Occurrences of Life: could we but see what a Labyrinth, what a Maze we tread, and what reason there is for every Turning:

Were our Eyes opened to see, as the young Man's were at Elifha's Prayer, the bright Host of auxiliary Spirits, that incamp around us; with what Care and Concern the good Angels engage on our behalf against the Powers of Darkness, and how many Dangers we escape thro' their Protection: could we but see the Ways and Means whereby God is pleased many times to relieve and reward distressed Virtue, and to rebuke and chastise

trium-

triumphant Villany; how when false Witnesses have risen up against the just Man, and *laid to his charge Things that he knew not*; Providence hath made his Righteousness as clear as the Noon-day, and turned all the malicious Efforts of his lying Adversaries to their own Shame and Confusion.

I say, could we see these secret Workings of Providence, the wonderful Scene would be delightfully surprizing: but altho' this pleasing Prospect be hidden from our bodily Eye, yet it is open to the Eye of Faith, because we are assured, that *the Angel of the Lord tarrieth about them that fear him, and delivereth them.*

But all these Instances of God's Goodness, which are visible in the Acts of his Providence, and in the Works of the Creation, are but faint Images of that stupendous Instance of his Love manifested to us in our Redemption. Such an Instance of the divine Goodness as proves Man, above all the other Sons of God, to be the peculiar Favourite of Heaven; for *the Angels which kept not their first Estate, but left their own Habitation, He hath reserved in everlasting Chains under Darkness, unto the Judgment of the great Day.*

But Man, who kept not his first Estate, is indulged, through the mysterious Work of our Redemption, the happy Priviledge of being again restored to the lost Favour of
God;

God: a Priviledge great beyond all Expref-
 fion, whether we confider the great Evils,
 from which we are thereby delivered; the
 Curfe of the Law, which is Death; and the
 great Blessings, to which we are thereby in-
 titled, viz. a Life of Grace here, and of Glo-
 ry hereafter; or the wonderful Means, by
 which this Priviledge was purchafed for, and
 confirmed to, us; for to accomplifh our Sal-
 vation, the eternal God came down from Hea-
 ven, united himfelf with our frail Flefh, and
dwelt among us full of Grace and Truth; and
 after a Life fpent in fpotlefs Purity, and ex-
 tensive Goodnefs, having with the greateft
Meeknefs born the Contradiction of Sinners, tho'
He went about doing good, He made his Soul,
upon the ignominious Crofs, an Offering for Sin;
 and by his moft precious Blood, obtain'd eternal
Redemption for us. Oh! the unfathomable Depth
of the Riches, as of the Wisdom and Knowledge,
fo of the Goodnefs of God! How unfeearchable
are thefe his Judgments, and his Ways paft
finding out!

These Things *the Angels desire to look into,*
 but cannot comprehend, *for the Love of Chrift*
paſſeth Knowledge, and let us who enjoy the
 Benefits of this adorable Myſtery, *bowe our*
Knees unto the Father of our Lord Jeſus Chrift,
that Chrift may dwell in our Hearts by Faith,
that we being rooted and grounded in Love, may
be able to comprehend with all Saints, what is
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the breadth and length, and depth and height of our Saviour's Love, that we may be filled with all the fulness of God.

What remains now, but to shew according to my *Last* Particular, what Influence the Consideration of this Attribute ought to have upon our Faith and Practice.

If God be good to all his Creatures, but more especially to us Men, it is our bounden Duty to bless God, for our Creation, Preservation, and all the Blessings of this Life, but above all, for his inestimable Love in the Redemption of the World by our Lord Jesus Christ. If God be infinitely good and gracious, we ought to form in our Minds no other Conception of him, than what, in some Measure, is worthy of the divine Majesty.

As often therefore as *we enter into his Courts*, let us, as saith the Apostle, *go boldly to the Throne of Grace*, for that is the way to *obtain Mercy, and find Grace to help in Time of Need*: For what Evil need we fear? nay, what good Things may we not hope for from so good a Being? for doubtless he seems more to consult God's Honour, who worships him with a cheerful Heart, and filial Affection, than he who invokes him with a superstitious and servile Fear.

He who believes the Goodness of God, loves him, and addresseth himself to him, as a most indulgent Father: whereas he who, press'd with abject Fears, approacheth the divine Majesty, views him not under that endearing Relation, but as a cruel and merciless Tyrant: and therefore, even the Prayers of such cannot *be pleasing to him*; for as the Apostle saith, it is not Fear, but *Love, that filleth the Law*.

Since God is infinitely good, it is our constant Duty to pray unto him, that He would give us those good Things which are convenient for us; and to return our unfeigned Thanks to him for those Blessings which He hath conferr'd upon us: by our Prayers and Praises, we acknowledge the Riches of his Goodness, and our Dependance upon it; of these Duties, each of them is necessary, neither of them to be omitted: But the giving of Thanks seems to have the Preference to Prayer: because the former seems to have less of self Interest than the latter: for he that *offereth God Thanks and Praise*, may be more truly said to honour him, than he that prayeth unto him: for this only hopeth for God's future Beneficence, while that acknowledgeth his past Favours.

Wherefore when we pray unto God for his future Mercies, let us not forget to praise him

him for those we have received: if we are not unmindful of these, God will not be unmindful of our Gratitude; but if we pray unto him without Thanksgiving, perhaps that *our Labour may be in vain in the Lord.*

Let us therefore, as St Paul adviseth, *be abundant in many Thanksgivings unto God,* so will God be abundant in his Goodness towards us.

SER-

*The Excellency of the Christian
Religion.*

S E R M O N VII.

I CORINTH. I. 18.

*The Preaching of the Cross is to them
that perish Foolishness: but unto
us which are saved, it is the Power
of God.*

SAINT Paul, who was the great and learned Apostle of Jesus Christ, and by whom he *was enriched with all Utterance and all Knowledge*, did not affect to preach the Gospel with *Wisdom of Words*, and with Strains of pompous Eloquence, that he might please the Vanity, and tickle the itching Ears of curious Men; but in a plain, familiar, and convincing Way laboured *to manifest the exceeding Riches of God's Grace*

Grace to Sinners, lest the Cross of Christ, saith he, in the Verse preceding my Text, should be made of none Effect.

The Knowledge of *Christ, and him crucified*, being that, which above all other Knowledge he desired to attain, and in comparison to which, he esteemed all other Knowledge to be no better than *Dross or Dung*; he therefore, above all Things else, desires to make all Men acquainted with it, as most effectual and necessary to their Salvation.

The *Jews require a Sign*, and the *Greeks seek after Wisdom*, but to silence the unreasonable Demands of the one, and to mortify the Pride of the other, he *preached Christ crucified*, tho' that was *to the Jews* (who expected a glorious and triumphant Messiah) *a Stumbling-block*, and *to the Greeks* (who delighted in Philosophy falsely so called) *Foolishness*: but *unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the Power of God, and Wisdom of God*. The meaning of which in short is this, that the Christian Doctrine, however it may seem to Men conceited of their own Knowledge, *put up by their fleshly Mind*, prepossessed with contrary Opinions, and bias'd by their corrupt Affections to be unreasonable and foolish: yet to all those, who are capable of Instruction, who are void of Pride and self Conceit, who are free from all vicious Dispositions and headstrong Passions,
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it will appear, upon an impartial Consideration, to be no less than *the Power and Wisdom of God*; Power most efficacious, and Wisdom most conducive to the promoting and Attainment of the best and noblest Ends, viz. the Glory of God, and the Salvation of Man.

For as the Apostle expresses it in my Text, *the Preaching of the Cross is to them (only) that (wilfully) perish, Foolishness, but unto us which are saved, it is the Power of God.*

This I shall endeavour to make evident, by laying before you some of the peculiar Excellencies of the Christian Religion: For by these we shall be convinced, inspite of all the Pleas lately advanced by the modern Advocates for natural Reason, that *the Foolishness of God is wiser than Men, and that the Weakness of God is stronger than Men.*

Now the *First* of these peculiar Excellencies of the Christian Religion is, that it gives us a true and suitable Notion of God, which is the best, or rather the only Foundation of all rational Religion: for it gives us such a Notion of God, as best agrees with his Nature, and our Condition and Capacity; such a Notion, as right Reason, before it was perverted by Sin, might dictate; the visible Works of Nature declare, and ancient Tradition, and wisest Experience do attest: for
tis

'tis such as will kindle in our Hearts the purest Love and Veneration for him, and excite and animate us to the most diligent and sincere Practice of our Duty towards him.

Whatever Perfections the Philosophers thro' Meditation and Reflection, or the Wisdom of Ages from primitive Tradition, have darkly ascribed to God; the Religion of Jesus doth in a most clear and perfect manner reveal unto us: for it represents God, as the only one Eternal, Omniscient, Omnipresent, and Almighty Being, the great Creator and gracious Preserver of all Things; it informs us, how He made and sustains this lower World, for the Use and Benefit of us Men; and with what a fatherly Affection He delights to do us good, whom He was pleased to make after his own Image; it informs us, how exceedingly merciful and indulgent He is to us; how pitiful and compassionate under our Necessities, and how ready to assist us under all our Sufferings and Afflictions: that He is easy to be intreated, and more willing to pardon and to forgive us, than we are to offend him, or even to pray unto him for Forgiveness.

In a word, the Religion of Jesus represents God, as terrible indeed in Justice, but most abundant in Mercy, most lovely, and amiable in Goodness, and most glorious and adorable in all the Operations of his Providence.

Whence

Whence it appears, that the God of Christians is not only the supreme and infallible Author of the elementary Order and Disposition of the Universe, which was the Divinity of the Pagan Philosophers; nor barely the providential Disposer of the Lives and Fortunes of Men, crowning his Worshippers with a long and happy Series of Years, which was the Portion of the Jews; but that He is to all Christians, to all those who are admitted *into the Covenant of Grace*, a God of Love and Consolation; a God, who possesses the Hearts and Souls of his Servants, who gives them an inward feeling of their Misery, and of his infinite Mercy; and unites himself to their Spirits, replenishing them with Humility and Comfort, with Affiance and Pleasure; and renders them uncapable of any Prospect, of any Aim, beside himself: for the God of Christians, as exhibited to us in the Gospel, is a God, who makes the Soul perceive and know, that He is her only good, and that she can find Peace and Repose in him alone; no Delight, no Joy, but in his Love.

What a comfortable and useful Knowledge of God is this! how agreeable to our Reason, and yet how far exceeding all the Discoveries which natural Reason is able to make! For all, who seek God without Jesus Christ, can never meet with such Light in their Enquiries, as may afford them true Satisfaction

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or solid Use; because, either they advance not so far as to know that there is a God, or if they do, yet they arrive thereby to an unprofitable Knowledge of him. For * *no Man knoweth the Father save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him; nor doth any Man come to the Father, or communicate with him, but by the Son; for there is no other Mediatour between God and Man, but the Man Christ Jesus.*

How excellent therefore and useful must the Doctrine and Religion of the holy Jesus be, which instill into us such right and worthy Notions of God! Such as are not only most desirable and perfective of the Understanding, but also such as have the greatest Influence upon our Will, in the moral and religious Conduct of our Lives; for according to our Notions of God and his Attributes, we shall be inclined to regulate our Vertue and Piety: if our Notions of God be just and true, we shall be induced to pay him such Honour and Worship, as is worthy, in some measure, of his infinite Majesty; and shall entertain an Abhorrence of all those Things, which are inconsistent with our Love of, and Veneration for, him.

But if our Notions of God are mistaken and erroneous, we shall be apt to serve him in such a Way, as will neither please nor be-

* Matth. 11. 27.

come him: thus did the Jews and Heathen, because their Conceptions of God were gross and carnal, instead of *worshipping him in Spirit and in Truth*, which is the only *reasonable and acceptable Service*, run into all the wild Extravagancies of Idolatry and Superstition.

And as our Religion is regulated according to our Notions of the supreme Being, so will our Morals likewise be; for if we believe God to be holy, just and good, we shall think it our Interest, as well as Duty, to *be holy as He is holy*; and, as far as the Frailty of our Nature will admit of, to resemble and imitate him, in all his other adorable Perfections. But if, as the Psalmist expresses it, *we believe God to be like unto ourselves*; the very Corruptions of our Nature, to which we are in Bondage, and from which we should endeavour to be freed and cleansed, will be the Rule and Standard of our Life and Conversation: and consequently we shall think it our Duty to indulge ourselves in Sin, and *glory in our Shame*.

A *Second* peculiar Excellency of the Christian Religion is, that, as it give us a right Notion of God, so doth it give us a true Notion of ourselves: for Man, by Nature, is nothing but a continual Subject of indelible and insuperable Errors; nor doth he know where, or how, to procure any certain Information:

formation: every Thing in the World abuseth his Curiosity, his two Criterions of Truth, Reason and Sense (besides that they are not always faithful to themselves) are wont reciprocally to mock and delude each other: our Senses beguile our Reason with false Appearances, and our Reason has likewise its false Consequences, wherewith to return and revenge the Cheat; the Passions discompose the Senses, and strike upon them the wrong Way; they lie, and forge, and misrepresent by a sort of vicious Emulation, so that barely by the Light of Nature, we neither know as we ought to do, either God, or ourselves.

Hence it is that Man, by Nature, is a Contradiction; within himself, in a perpetual State of War; *the Spirit*, as St Paul expresses it, *lusting against the Flesh, and the Flesh lusting against the Spirit*. And yet so much of the Image of God remaineth in him, as is apt to swell him with Pride, and so much of the Image of a Beast, or Devil, as is enough to humble and depress him with Grief and Shame.

This Light and Darknes in Man, this civil War between his Reason and his Passions, hath, in order to restore Man's Peace and Happiness, given occasion to some Philosophers, such as were the Stoicks, to renounce their Passions, as beneath the Dignity of a wise Man, and to affect to be as Gods: and

to other Philosophers, such as were the Epicureans, to renounce their Reason, as a troublesome and insufficient Guide, and to become Beasts to make themselves happy by an overfree indulgence of their Passions.

But neither of these Schemes could have their desired Effect, for our Reason hath continual Cause to accuse the Baseness and Injustice of the Passions, which disturb the Repose of them, who give themselves up to their Dominion; and the Passions will maintain their Empire in the Hearts of those, who proudly boast of their Extirpation.

Now, what can be the Reason of this Tumult and Confusion in the Soul of Man? into what Cause can it be resolved? The Light of natural Reason is utterly at a loss to account for it. We see all other Creatures act according to the superior Principles of their Nature: Man, in spite of his Reason, is the only Rebel, a Contrariety to himself, as well as to the Laws of God, form'd like an Angel, but sunk into a Brute.

The Cause of this had been a Riddle, never to have been explain'd, had not the Word of God unfolded it: For thence we know this *Mystery*, in a great measure, *hid from Ages*, (viz.) that Man was created *after the Image of God, in Righteousness and true Holiness*, but that our first Parents, by Transgression falling, defaced that glorious Image, and introduced

duced into themselves, and all their Posterity, that blind Disorder and Confusion, which naturally reigns in the Heart of every Man.

But the Word of God, not only points out this original Corruption, the Foundation of all our Miseries, but at the same time mercifully points out their Cure, the Foundation of all our Happiness. It not only tells us, how we fell from God, by the first Adam's Transgression; but also tells us, how we may again be united to God, by the second Adam's perfect Obedience: all this is open'd to our View by the Incarnation of our Lord from Heaven.

Let our weak Reason then be humbled, and our frail Nature compos'd in Silence. The saving Knowledge of God and ourselves, to which, of ourselves, we are utter Strangers, is only declared to us by our Lord and Maker, what then should withhold our Belief and Adoration of this divine Light, which is set before us?

A *Third* peculiar Excellency of the Christian Religion is, that it prescribes a most compleat and perfect Rule of Life, such as is most suitable to our Reason, and conducive to our Happiness.

For if we consider the Rules of Piety towards God, what can be more reasonable, than that we should love and honour him, who

who is most Excellent? and fear to displease him, who is most Just and Powerful? than that we should gratefully adore his Goodness, to whom we owe our Being, and all the Comforts of Life? than that we should rely upon, and *put our trust in him, who is able to give us more than we can desire or deserve*, because omnipotent, and most willing, because infinitely good and gracious?

What more reasonable than that we should offer him *our Thanks and Praise*, who daily provides for, and maintains us? than that we should offer up our Prayers to him, to show'r down those Blessings which we want? and upon easy Terms to pardon those Sins, which we have committed? for *if we confess and forsake our Sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our Sins, and to cleanse us from all Unrighteousness.*

Nor are the Rules of Life towards our Neighbour less reasonable, than those of Piety towards God. For what more reasonable than that we should lay aside all Malice and Envy, Pride and Ambition, Slander and Detraction, and all other vicious Dispositions, which make us no less uneasy to ourselves, than injurious to other Men? what more reasonable, than that we should love our Neighbour, as ourselves? that we should promote his Welfare, as we do our own? that we should sympathize with him in his Sorrows
and

and Misfortunes, and by our friendly Assistance deliver him out of, or support him under them?

What more reasonable, than that we should follow, *as much as is possible, Peace with all Men*, doing good to, and praying for, not only our Friends, but Enemies? for thereby we imitate the diffusive Goodness of our Father which is in Heaven, who is kind even to the unthankful, and sendeth his Rain upon the just and unjust alike: How far short of this was the Jewish and Gentile Morality; for the former would have no Regard for those, who were of a different Perswasion, nor either of them forgive those, who had offended them; *an Eye for an Eye, and a Tooth for a Tooth*, was an avowed Principle among the Jews, and to revenge themselves of their Enemies, was by the wisest Heathen deem'd a Sign of a prudent and generous Spirit.

But 'tis no wonder, that the magnified Rules of Morality, delivered by the wise *Disputers of the World*, should be far inferior to the Rules of the Gospel; for those were only the Dictates of Reason in its degenerate State, improved by Philosophy, whereas these were the Edicts of the God of Purity and Wisdom, which teach Man to be what he would have been, had he continued in his State of Innocence. Add to this, that these excellent Rules of Life are recommended to
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our Practice, by the most perfect Example, by the most powerful Assistance, and by the strongest Motives, that can be urged to enforce our Observance of them. They are recommended to our Practice

First, by the most powerful Example. A good Example is the shortest Method of Instruction, and the most engaging Motive to Vertue, while it convinces us, that the most perfect Rules of Life are not impracticable, it sweetly attracts and powerfully excites our Imitation.

For there never was any Standard of Vertue to be compared with that, which our Religion exposes to our View: for the Example of our Lord is a sure and infallible Rule: whereas the Example of the best of Men is deficient; for these have their Failings and Faults, as well as their Vertues and Graces; because the Fountain of original Corruption will frequently send forth such Streams, which are impure. Not only the Heathen Doctors of Morality, as Seneca, Tully, Socrates, and the rest of those Worthies, had their favourite Vices, as well as their excellent Vertues, and were no less remarkable for their Covetousness, vain Glory, and Idolatry, than for their admirable moral Precepts they have left to the World.

But we also find in sacred Writ, that the Saints of God are noted for their sinful Mis-carriages,

carriages, as well as for their Goodness: for the excellent Characters even of the Father of the Faithful, that *Friend of God*; of the *Man after God's own Heart*; and of the greatest and best Apostles of his well beloved Son, were stain'd and polluted by the poisonous Mixture of Sin: but none of this is to be found in the Example of our Lord: for *God would not suffer his holy One to see Corruption*, any more in a moral, than He would in a natural Sense; so that it is our bounden Duty and Happiness, as much as in us lies, to imitate the Example of our Lord: for if a Sense of Gratitude towards our greatest Friend, who liv'd and died, and rose again to save us; if a Sense of Honour to be like the Son of the most High, who is the Lord and Maker of all Things; if a Sense of our own Interest, spiritual and eternal, can have any Influence with us; we shall endeavour *to walk as Christ walked, and to follow the Lamb of God whithersoever He went*: and this we are encouraged to do

Secondly, by the most powerful Assistance promised to all, who shall diligently labour in the Lord's Vineyard: for God is not like an Egyptian Taskmaster, requiring us *to make Brick without Straw*; for there is no Duty, which He hath injoin'd us, how hard and repugnant soever it may appear to Flesh and Blood, but He gives us Strength sufficient

to perform: for He arms his Servants *with Power from on high*, and with Wisdom from above to quench or repel all *the fiery Darts*, and to defeat the subtle Devices of *the great Deceiver*.

Nor is there any Condition, or Circumstance of Life, so dark or intricate, so distress'd or miserable, but will be rendred easy to us, if we heartily implore the divine Assistance; for God will give his holy Spirit to all those, who shall faithfully and fervently pray unto him for it, that Spirit who is stiled *the Spirit of Love and Consolation, the Spirit of Life, of Light, and Truth*; which all those are happily convinced of, who *are led by that blessed Spirit*; for they experimentally feel, in their own Hearts, his efficacious Influence; they find that He dispels all Clouds of Ignorance, Error, and Prejudice; that He clears up their Apprehensions of the chiefest Good; that He enlightens their Understandings, and rectifies their Wills; awakens their Conscience, and subdues their inordinate Passions; sanctifies their Grievs, and refines their Joys; softens their Hearts, and humbles their Spirits; weakens the Strength of their Sins, and strengthens the Weakness of their Virtues; and in a word, enables them *to be more than Conquerors, through him that loves them*.

Whereas they who want his sacred Influence, and are left to themselves, having no
other

other Guide, but their own weak Reason, and their headstrong Passions, are liable to fall a Prey to every Temptation, and to be possess'd and misled by the evil Spirit of Error and Delusion, 'till, like *Gadarene Swine*, they are hurried down a Precipice into the great Deep, into the Gulf of final Perdition:

Which reminds me of those powerful Motives, with which the Christian Rules of Life are recommended to our Practice: for endless Woe is denounced against incorrigible Sinners; and everlasting Life is the Portion and Inheritance promised to all those, who shall lead an holy and Godly Life: for thus saith the Apostle, *God will render to every Man according to his Deeds; to them, who by patient Continuance in well Doing, seek for Glory, and Honour, and Immortality, eternal Life: but to them who are contentious, and obey not the Truth, but obey Unrighteousness, Indignation and Wrath, Tribulation and Anguish, upon every Soul of Man that doth Evil.*

These are the cogent Sanctions of the divine Laws, by which we are most strongly deterr'd from Vice, and engaged to the Pursuit of Vertue; and if these will not prevail with us, it is not likely that any others will: for let Tully, or any other Heathen Philosopher, much more potent, than any of our modern Advocates for Reason, tell us, that Vertue is lovely and amiable in itself, sufficient

for it's own Reward, and that, if she could be seen by mortal Eyes, her Beauty is such, that she would make the whole World in love with her; yet how little would this avail to check or restrain the impetuous Tide of Men's Passions, when the alluring Temptations of Profit, Honour, or Pleasure, shall tempt them to violate their Duty? They would doubtless, inspite of the Dictates of Reason, or the Beauties of Vertue, be disposed to indulge their Passions, and follow the Bent of their vitious Inclinations; for the present criminal Gratifications of Sense, as is evident from Fact, would have more Force, than all the Remonstrances of Reason.

But where the Motives to Duty, prescribed by the Religion of Jesus, are believed; if they are duly weigh'd, and considered, by us, who can dare to transgress, or refuse to obey the Laws of God? Can a rational Creature indulge himself in Sin, when he believes, that in so doing, he must *dwell with everlasting Burnings*? or deny Obedience to the just Laws of God, when he is assured, that in so doing, he shall enjoy everlasting Happiness?

These Conclusions are obvious to every Man's Reason, and therefore it is evident, that the Motives drawn from Christian Principles infinitely exceed those, which our natural Reason can possibly suggest, for the Practice of moral or religious Duty; and consequently

frequently we have sufficient Cause to conclude, that all the Arguments of our modern Advocates, for Reason's being a sufficient Guide in Religion, are weak, dangerous, and false.

Having now shewn that the Christian Religion gives us a true Notion of God, a just Account of ourselves, and a most perfect Rule of Life, most suitable to our Reason, and conducive to our present and future Happiness, recommended to our Practice by the most perfect Example, by the most powerful Assistance, and by the strongest Motives, that can be urged to enforce our Obedience to it, I shall conclude with two or three Inferences.

Since not all the Wisdom and Subtlety of the Philosophers, nor all the Eloquence and Rhetorick of the most renown'd Orators, could ever draw so fair and beautiful a Picture of Vertue, nor represent her with such graceful Charms, nor give such unanswerable Reasons, why we should pursue and embrace her, or discover such lovely and valuable Fruits, which spring from her, as the unlearn'd and despis'd *Apostles of Christ* have done; since the Truths they delivered, have been confirm'd by Miracles, the sure Credentials of divine Authority, and recommend themselves to us by their own intrinsick Worth, whereby we see, how far short all
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other Schemes of Religion and Morality, founded upon natural Reason, are of the Religion of Jesus, *the Kings Daughter, who is all glorious within, and whose Cloathing is of wrought Gold*; let us then firmly believe, and adhere to this Religion, let us without wavering assent to the Articles of Faith, which she hath revealed; and pursue those excellent Rules of Life, which she prescribes, so shall we be wise to the noblest of all Purposes, *wise unto Salvation.*

Finally, since in the Gospel of Christ, the most excellent Rules of Life, that ever appeared in the World, are prescribed, we may conclude, that those Men who endeavour to substitute their Idol Reason in the Place of God's Word, are guilty of the greatest Folly, basest Ingratitude, and most presumptuous Impiety: for they are as *venemous as the Poison of a Serpent, even like the deaf Adder that stoppeth her Ears, and refuseth to hear the Voice of the Charmer, charm he never so wisely*; nay, they insolently presume to exalt their own Wisdom above the Knowledge of God; *they set at nought all the Counsel of God, and despise all his Admonition and Reproof*: and in effect boldly say, with the Blasphemer in the Psalms, *is there Knowledge with the most High?* But what could induce these Men to *shut their Eyes against* and discard *the Light of the Gospel?* and make Choice of their own
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weak Reason, as a sufficient Guide, in Matters of Faith and Practice? why, it is their own Pride, that will not suffer them to believe; and their own Lusts, that will not suffer them to obey the Gospel of Christ, that induce them to renounce the Gospel, and give themselves up to the sole Guidance of their Reason; because this is corrupt enough to sooth their Pride and Vanity, and indulge them in, and dispense with them for, the criminal Gratifications of Sense.

But let us not *be carried away* with the false Doctrines, or sophistical Reasonings of these Men; for what can *these Bablers say* to incline us to it? for can corrupt Reason, which knows not God, teach us our Duty towards God? can that give any Ease or Comfort to a wounded Spirit, a Spirit wounded with Sin? or give any Assurance of Pardon for it? It may tell us, that God is merciful, but it likewise tells us, that He is just; but 'tis Christianity alone that informs us, how Justice and Mercy may be reconciled, and Sin punish'd, while the Sinner is absolved.

Let us then who profess ourselves Disciples of Christ, continue to be his faithful Soldiers and Servants to our Lives End; for why *should we forsake him? or whither should we go?* since *He alone bath the Words of eternal Life.*

Of Stedfastness in the Christian Religion.

S E R M O N VIII.

I C O R. XV. 58.

Therefore, my beloved Brethren, be ye stedfast, unmovable, always abounding in the Work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know, that your Labour is not in vain in the Lord.

SAINT Paul in this glorious and inimitable Chapter, having proved the Resurrection of Christ, by Scripture, by a Cloud of Witnesses, as well as by his own Testimony, having from thence argued for our Resurrection; for *Christ*, saith he, *being risen from the Dead, is become the first Fruits of them that Slept; for since by Man*
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came Death, by Man came also the Resurrection of the Dead; for as in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive: having shewn how we shall be raised, and with what Bodies we shall come; that as the same Grain, which is sown in the Earth dies, is quickened, and springs up with a Body proper to it; so shall our natural Bodies, after they shall have been sown in Corruption, Weakness, and Dishonour, be raised in Incorruption, Power, and Glory: having likewise shewn what shall become of those, who shall remain alive at our Saviour's second Coming, that they shall be miraculously changed in a Moment, in the twinkling of an Eye, into an incorruptible and unchangeable State; for at the Sound of the last Trump, this corruptible and mortal Body must put on Incorruption and Immortality, that Death, according to Isaiah's Prophecy, may be swallowed up in Victory.

This great Apostle, in Contemplation of this comfortable Truth, triumpheth over Death and the Grave, saying, *O Death where is thy Sting? O Grave where is thy Victory?* And thro' a grateful Sense of this illustrious and stupendous Conquest, he returns *Thanks to God, who giveth us the Victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ, who, by his Death and Resurrection, plucked out the Sting of Death, which is Sin; and broke the Strength of Sin, which is the Law, enabling us by Grace to*

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extinguish the Horrors of the one, and escape the Condemnation of the other: and that we might be Partakers of this Victory, and not forfeit the glorious Priviledges we are intitled to thereby, he, like a most affectionate Friend and Brother, concludes this admirable Discourse with a most tender and moving Exhortation to Holiness of Life, which he here calls *the Work of the Lord*: therefore my beloved Brethren, *be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the Work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know, that your Labour is not in vain in the Lord.*

In discoursing of which Words I shall endeavour to shew,

- I. *First*, what we are to understand, by the Work of the Lord.
- II. *Secondly*, what it is to be stedfast therein.
- III. *Thirdly*, what it is to be unmoveable therein.
- IV. *Fourthly*, what is meant, by always abounding in the Work of the Lord.
And,
- V. *Lastly*, to shew what great Encouragement we have to do so, implied in these Words, forasmuch as ye know, that your *Labour is not in vain in the Lord.* And,

First, I am to shew, what we are to understand by *the Work of the Lord*. By the Work
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of the Lord is here meant, the Vertues and Graces of the Spirit of the Lord ; for what the Apostle here calls the Work of the Lord, he elsewhere stiles it, the Work or *Fruit of the Spirit* ; thus Gal. ch. 5. opposing the Works of the Spirit to the Works of the Flesh, he saith, *Now the Works of the Flesh are manifest, which are these, Adultery, Fornication, Uncleanness, Lasciviousness, Idolatry, Witchcraft, Hatred, Variance, Emulations, Wrath, Strife, Seditions, Heresies, Envyings, Murders, Drunkenness, Revellings, and such like, of the which I tell you, that they who do such things shall not inherit the Kingdom of God: But the Work, or Fruit of the Spirit, is Love, Joy, Peace, Long-suffering, Gentleness, Goodness, Faith, Meekness, Temperance, against such there is no Law ; no Law to condemn, [but a Law to reward the Sincere, tho' imperfect Services of those who do them, with an exceeding and eternal Weight of Glory: For we know, that if we abound in these Works, our Labour will not be in vain in the Lord, provided we persevere therein to the End.]* Which leads me to my

Second Particular, which is to shew what it is to be stedfast in the Work of the Lord. Now to be stedfast in the Work of the Lord signifies, that we must be stedfast in the Christian Faith, a lively Faith, which works by Love, and is productive of all those Vertues,

and Graces, which adorn and make happy the Christian Life, and has this high Character given of it by St Paul, *by Faith, we are justified, and saved.*

To be stedfast in the Faith signifies, that we should be well grounded, and settled in the Principles of the Christian Religion; or, as St Paul expresses it, *we should be rooted and built up in Christ, and established in the Faith**, as we have been taught by him, and his Apostles, who through the Spirit have transmitted that *Form of sound Words, which is able to make us wise unto Salvation*, provided, like Timothy, *we hold it fast*: by which is meant, not only that we should treasure up, and retain in our memory, the essential Points of Christianity, but that, while *we are in the Body*, we should also make it our Business and Delight, to the best of our Power, to understand them, that we may be able, when duly required, to give a Reason of our Faith; and with the warmest Affection to embrace them.

To be stedfast in the Faith signifies, that we should give our unfeigned Assent to it, in its full and proper Sense, as it is delivered in God's Word, & expounded by the Church, without adding to or diminishing from it; not putting *false Glosses upon it*, like the Scribes and Pharisees of old, to gratify their

* Coloss. 1. 23.

own, or the Lufts of other Men; nor like the Church of Rome, building upon the golden Foundation, which Christ himself hath laid, a vile Superstructure of *Wood, Hay, and Stubble*; nor with some of our modern Hereticks, whose *Preaching is Lies*, and whose Doctrine in the literal Sense is Anti-Christian, denying or perverting the fundamental Articles of Faith; but preserving them in their native Simplicity, untainted by any of the erroneous Comments of our weak, but conceited, Reason; or those *high Imaginations, which would exalt themselves against the Knowledge of Christ.*

But further, to be *stedfast in the Faith* doth imply, that we should not be ashamed of it, but that we should publicly own and confess *the Faith of Christ crucified*, and manfully fight under his Banner, against all Corruptions and Alterations, which the World, the Flesh, and the Devil, labour to introduce: and consequently, that we should not betray or give it up to the Sophistry, or false Reasonings of those, who contradict or disbelieve it; but, according to our Abilities, maintain and defend it against the artful Malice, and deceitful Insinuations, of spiritual Wickedness; resolutely opposing Truth to Error; the Form of sound Words to heretical Doctrines; and the saving Knowledge of Christ to the impious Positions of Philosophy falsely so called. And

And finally, *to be stedfast in the Faith* implies, that we should reduce the Principles of Christianity to Practice; for *Faith without Works*, like a Body without a Soul, *is dead being alone*; and is of no farther use towards the securing our Salvation, than *the Faith of Devils, who believe and tremble*.

And as we must continue stedfast, so must we also *be immoveable in the Faith of Christ, and Work of the Lord*: For 'tis not a temporary Faith, how stedfast soever it may be for a Season, but a Faith immoveable, 'till it is swallowed up in Vision, that can entitle us to the great Rewards, that will attend our Christian Labours. Like as the House, which the wise Master-Builder founded upon a Rock, was neither to be overturned by the descending Rains, nor the rushing Floods, nor the tempestuous Winds, which beat upon it; so must the spiritual Edifice, which is erected in the true Believer's Heart, neither be shaken by the impious Scoffs of atheistical Men, nor undermined by the enticing Words, of *false Apostles, tho', like Satan, they transform themselves into Angels of Light*.

If we be true followers of Christ, our Faith will be immoveable, and our Duty inviolate, inspite of the *fiery Trial* of Persecutions, or the more dangerous Allurements of Pleasure, Profit, or Honour: For tho' it should please God to exercise us, as He did some of his faithful

faithful Servants heretofore, *with cruel Mockings and Scourgings, yea, moreover with Bonds and Imprisonments; tho' He should suffer us, to be stoned, to be sawn asunder, to be slain with the Sword; or to let us wander in Sheepskins or Goat-skins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented; yet, through Faith, we shall endure it with heroick Bravery, as seeing him, who is invisible.*

Nor will the severest Trial be more than what the true Believer will be able, thro' Christ which strengthens him, to undergo: For what shall separate us from the Love of Christ? Shall Tribulation, or Distress, or Persecution, or Famine, or Nakedness, or Peril, or Sword? Shall we not in all these things, thro' a lively Faith, looking unto Jesus the Author and Finisher of our Faith, who for the Joy that was set before him endured the Cross, and despised the Shame, be more than Conquerors through him that loved us?

Nay, shall we not rather, with the Primitive Worthies, count it our Joy and Honour to suffer for his Sake, who hath done and suffered so much for ours? For are we not assured by the great Apostle St Paul, who himself died a Martyr for that Faith, which he once persecuted, *that our light Affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal Weight of Glory?* And as our Faith must not be shaken by the Storms

Storms of Persecution, so must it maintain its Ground inspite of the more dangerous Allurements of Pleasure, Profit, or Honour: these Allurements I call more dangerous; because it hath been observ'd, that even some of those who have bravely *fought the good Fight of Faith* against the severest Trials of Persecution, yet have been vanquish'd by the soft and insinuating Charms of Pleasure, Profit, and Honour; like Sampson, whom the Philistines, with all their Power, attempted to subdue, but in vain, 'till he was ensnared by the false Careffes of a treacherous Delilah.

But he that hath *so learned the Truth, as it is in Christ, will hold fast his Integrity*, and be able, through Faith, to get the Victory over the World, and all its Temptations: for is he tempted, as Joseph was, to sin, by the most prevailing Charms of sensual Pleasures, his Faith will presently suggest to him, as it did to Joseph, *how can I do this great Wickedness, and sin against God?* Doth the Pleasure he is invited to seem great, alas! he knows that the Punishment, if he embraces it, and the Reward, if he rejects it, will be infinitely greater.

Doth the World, by shewing and offering all its Riches, Honours, and Glories, endeavour to bribe him to renounce his Baptism, and violate his Duty, his Faith will bring our Saviour's Question to his Mind, *What will it profit*

profit a Man, if he shall gain the whole World, and lose his own Soul? or what shall a Man give in exchange for his Soul?

Wherefore we may conclude, that whenever we give way to Sin, being affrighted, or allured into it, by the Terrors or Temptations of the World, it is because our Faith grows weak, and wavers, as St Peter's did, *when he began to sink*: For where Faith is strong, there can be no Fear; for true Faith is made perfect by Love, and *true Love casteth out Fear*, all base apostatizing Fear of Persecution for Christ's Sake; and will enable us, like Moses, *to choose rather to suffer Affliction with the People of God, than to enjoy, even in Pharaoh's Court, the Pleasure of Sin for a Season*: and will excite us to Vigilance and Industry in our Christian Calling, and daily animate us *to abound more and more in the Work of the Lord*. Which brings me to my

Fourth Particular, which is to shew what is meant by always abounding in the Work of the Lord. To abound in the Work of the Lord, is elsewhere express'd by bringing forth Fruits meet for Repentance; by Fruits of Righteousness; by Growing in Grace, and the like; and consequently to abound in the Work of the Lord, is continually to improve, and excell in those good Works, which are conformable to the Nature and Will of God, and to those eter-

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nal Rules of Justice and Holiness, which Christ hath revealed in his Gospel, and enables us, by his blessed Spirit, who quickens and assists us, to perform.

And that we may not be ignorant, what *these Works of the Lord, or Fruits of the Spirit* are, the Apostle acquaints us, that they are such as *Love, Joy, Peace, Long-suffering, Gentleness, Goodness, Faith, Meekness, Temperance,* to which all Kind of good Works, relating to God, ourselves, and our Neighbour may be reduced.

These are the Works of the Lord, which we are exhorted, not only to do, but also *to abound in*: for they who do not proceed in a Course of Vertue, will soon lose the Habit of it, because growth and improvement is the very Essence of Morality; there being no middle State between not advancing, and receding; no middle Season between its Spring and Fall. And therefore we are required not to hide *our Talent* in the Earth, but to improve it, that *our Lord when he cometh may receive his own with Usury.*

Nor are we to be content with slight Improvements in Vertue, but we are to contend and strive to attain the highest Degrees thereof, for we are commanded *to be holy, as God is holy; and to be perfect, as our heavenly Father is perfect*; not that we can rise up to, and equal the Divine Perfections, for
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they are infinite, but that it is our Duty to imitate those Perfections, so far as our weak Abilities will admit of. For we are commanded *to give all Diligence, to add to our Faith Vertue; and to Vertue Knowledge; and to Knowledge Temperance; and to Temperance Patience; and to Patience Godliness; and to Godliness brotherly Kindness, and to brotherly Kindness Charity;* and so to proceed from one Vertue to another, 'till we shall arrive *in the unity of the Faith, and of the Knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect Man, unto the measure of the Stature of the Fulness of Christ.*

If these things therefore *be in us and abound,* we shall not, as St Peter assures us, *be barren or unfruitful in the Knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ:* and if we are not barren or unfruitful, we shall glorify God the Father, and prove ourselves to be true Disciples of God the Son. For thus, saith our Lord, *herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much Fruit, for so, saith He, shall ye be my Disciples.*

And yet we must observe, that tho' we bear ever so much Fruit, it will be a good Foundation for Humility, but none for Pride: because *when we have done all, we are but unprofitable Servants;* the best of us are but Branches grafted into Christ the Vine, *without whom we can do nothing:* so that if we

remain stedfast and immoveable, *always abounding in the Work of the Lord, in the ways of Vertue*, against the Floods of Ungodliness, we must, with St Paul, *give Thanks to God, who giveth us the Victory, through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

But if it be our Duty *always to abound in the Work of the Lord*, some weak Persons will say, what Time have we to follow our secular Employments, which if we neglect, Want and Indigence must be our Portion? To this we reply, that our honest secular Employments are by no means inconsistent with *the Work of the Lord*; for while, at proper Seasons, we fairly and justly pursue those, we may be truly said to do the Lord's Work, as well as our own; for it is the Lord's Command, that we *should be honest and diligent in our respective Callings*, as well as sincere and fervent in Works of Piety and Devotion.

Add to this, that if our secular Employments were inconsistent *with always abounding in the Work of the Lord*, St Paul would contradict his own example, and other Precepts which he hath given. For St Paul himself after his Conversion, *tho' he laboured more abundantly than all the rest, was by Occupation a Tentmaker, and sometimes work'd at his Craft**. And at the same time, that he exhorts the Thessalonians to abound in Godliness, Cha-

* Acts 18. 3.

stity, Justice, holiness, and other * *Works of the Lord*; he bids them *study to be quiet, and to do their own Business, and to work with their own Hands*; that they may walk honestly toward them that are without, and that they may have lack of nothing.

And truly they who thus abound in the *Work of the Lord*, can lack nothing, nothing that is good to encourage their Christian Labours. Which reminds me of my

Last Particular, which is to shew, what great Encouragement we have to abound in the *Work of the Lord*, implied in these Words, *we know that our Labour is not in vain in the Lord.*

We know and feel, by the present Peace, and Pleasure, which attend the Performance of our Duty, and our Improvement therein, that our Labour is not in vain: for if the Heathen Philosophers had such exalted Notions of Vertue, as to affirm, that it was its own Reward; how much greater Reason have we Christians to entertain that Opinion, since Christian Vertue is founded upon surer and nobler Principles, and directed to a far more glorious End, than the Vertue of the Heathen was, and consequently at present affords a far sweeter Pleasure, and more spiritual Joy, than that possibly could?

* 1 Theff. chap. 4.

But the present Peace, and Pleasure, which the good Christian enjoys, by *abounding in the Works of the Lord*, is not a Reward terminated by this Life only, but comprehends *Joy and Assurance for ever, a glorious Resurrection, and a blisful Immortality*. For *God is not unrighteous, that He should forget our Labours of Love*, our abounding in his Work; for He will render to every Man according to his Deeds; *Indignation and Wrath, Tribulation and Anguish, to every Soul that doth evil; but to them who by patient Continuance in well doing, seek for Glory, and Honour, and Immortality, eternal Life*: not that our imperfect Obedience can merit such an immense Reward, because our best Works can bear no manner of Proportion to it; but that we are intitled thereto, through the *rich Mercies of God*, for the Sake of the all-sufficient Merits of Christ: for tho' *the just Wages of Sin is Death*, yet *eternal Life is the Gift of God, through Jesus Christ our Lord*.

Eternal Life is the Gift of God, and by it is signified all the Happiness which our Souls and Bodies are capable of enjoying; and promised by him, *who cannot lie*, to all who shall *abound in his Work*.

Our Souls will then be blessed with the clear Sight of the most perfect Being, and will see him, *not as they do now, through a Glass darkly,*

darkly, but face to face; and will know him even as they are known. They shall dwell for ever in his reviving Presence, whose Favour is Life, and whose Love is ineffable Glory.

Nor shall they only be transported with the full Vision of God, but also be transform'd into the Image of his Perfections; for the Apostle tells us, that they *shall see God, and be like him too*, and shall be placed in those glorious Mansions, which our Saviour *hath prepared*, far above the reach of Cares and Fears, of Troubles and Afflictions; and know no other Passions, but Joy and Love, such only as may conduce to make them completely blessed.

There shall they be admitted to the free Society of Angels, and of *the Spirits of just Men made perfect*: and have the Honour to cohabit and converse with the blessed Jesus, *the express Image of God's Person*, in his human Nature, the *great Author and Finisher of our Faith*; and meritorious Cause of our Salvation.

Nor shall our Souls alone enjoy this Happiness, but our Bodies also shall partake of the same; for they shall be raised again from the *dark Chambers of the Grave*, by Christ, *who is the Resurrection and the Life*, and being fashion'd like unto his glorious Body, according to the mighty working, whereby He is able to sub-
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due all things unto himself, shall be reunited to their Souls, never more to be divorced afunder, but inseparably to dwell together; and with all the Host and Company of Heaven, shall sing eternal Praises and Halleluiahs, to him that sitteth upon the Throne, and to the Lamb that was slain, to God even our Father, and to our Lord Jesus Christ who hath loved us, and wash'd us from our Sins, in his own Blood.

All this and much more than we are able to conceive, much less to describe, is reserved for those, who shall *always abound in the Work of the Lord.*

But we may assure ourselves, that they, who shall most abound therein, will most abound in his Love. All his faithful Servants indeed will be made happy to the utmost Degree their Capacities will admit of; but they, whose Capacities have been more enlarged, by their greater Improvement of their Talents, than others have made, will doubtless be advanced to greater and higher Degrees of Glory.

Let then the great *Recompence of Reward, the Prize of Glory which is set before us*, excite our Diligence, inflame our Desires, and quicken our Endeavours to obtain it.

Let us not be content to win the lowest, but labour with all our might to gain the
highest

highest Prize; for in *running the Christian Race*, this is a very laudable Ambition, an Ambition of which our Conscience will approve, God will accept, and Christ will applaud: for He will say to all those, who shall thus bravely acquit themselves, *well done ye good and faithful Servants, enter ye into the Joy of your Lord.*

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I. *The Example of Christ.*

S E R M O N IX.

A C T S X. 38.

Who went about doing Good.

THese Words are an historical Abridgment of our Saviour's Life and Conversation, being the comprehensive Part of the Character, which St Peter gave of Christ to Cornelius the Centurion, when *he was sent by the Spirit of God to teach him, what he ought to believe and do:* for which purpose he thought nothing more proper to stir up his Zeal, to strengthen his Faith, and excite a devout Imitation, than to set before his Eyes the great Example of his Lord and Master.

For it is not so much the Wisdom and Eloquence of the Teacher, as the Excellency of his Example, the Conformity of his Actions

to

to his Instructions, that can prevail with his Hearers to embrace and practise his Rules of Life.

A smooth Oration *may tickle the itching Ears* of curious Men, and amuse the ignorant and unlearn'd; but it is good Example, that, like the kindly Heat of the Sun, enlivens, animates, and makes the Seed of the Word sown effectual, that renders the *Word of God quick and powerful, like a two-edged Sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of the Soul and Spirit, and of the Joints and Marrow*, with respect even to presumptuous and obstinate Transgressors; but converts the same Word, with respect to *the broken Spirit*, to those that are of an *humble and contrite Heart*, into *the Oil of Gladness*, refreshing and cheering the drooping and disconsolate Soul.

Hence those Teachers, *who say, and do not*, who preach, but practise not, the Gospel, are like the Scribes and Pharisees, who proudly *sat in the Seat of Moses, tithed Mint, Anise, and Cummin, but neglected the weightier Matters of the Law; laid heavy Burdens on Men's Shoulders grievous to be born, but would not touch or move them with one of their Fingers.*

But those Teachers, on the other hand, who practise what they preach, and *shew forth their Faith by their Works*, are *the faithful Stewards of Christ's Mysteries, and Dispensers of his Word*, who by the united Light of their

Life and Doctrine, dispel the Clouds of Men's Prejudice, and Partiality, cast down *all vain Imaginations* of their impious Hearts, and *every high thing that exalteth itself against the Knowledge of God, and bring into captivity every thought to the Obedience of Christ.*

Such an holy Prophet and Priest was the blessed Jesus, for *He dwelt among us*, with respect to his Example, as well as his Doctrine, *full of Grace and Truth.*

And therefore St Peter, in his Speech to Cornelius, by the Light of both, informs his Understanding, and influences his Will, shewing him, *how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the holy Ghost, and with Power, who went about doing good*, that he might be assured, that He was able to teach Mankind *the whole Will of God*, and by the persuasive Eloquence of his gracious Example, be inclined to obey it. I shall therefore in my following Discourse,

- I. *First*, endeavour to set before you the most excellent Example of our Saviour, sumn'd up in the Words of my Text, *who went about doing good.*
- II. *Secondly*, to convince you of the reasonableness of the Duty implied, viz. our Imitation of our Lord's Example. And,
- III. *Lastly*, conclude with a few Reflections from the whole.

First,

First, I am to set before you the most excellent Example of our Saviour, summ'd up in the words of my Text, *who went about doing good.*

How to describe this to perfection, neither the Thoughts, nor *Tongues of Men, or Angels*, could conceive, or be able to express: but since the Spirit of Wisdom hath given us some Memorials of our Saviour's Life, we may by their help, form some Resemblance of it.

From thence we may learn, that *doing good* was his *Meat and Drink*, his dayly Practice and Delight; that all his Actions were so many Mixtures of Power and Mercy, of Miracle and Love; such as declared his divine Mission and Extraction, and became his high Office of Redeemer and Saviour of the World: such as proved him to be the Light and Life of Men; to be the Fountain of, and Guide to Happiness; to be the Prince of Peace, and Son of that eternal God who proclaimed himself to be *the Lord merciful, and gracious; long suffering, and abundant in Goodness and Truth.*

From the infallible *Oracles of God* we learn, that the second Person of the blessed Trinity, tho' in Glory equal to the Father, and in Majesty Co-eternal, *bow'd the Heavens, came down*, and cloathed himself with our frail Flesh, that He might visit (*and dwell among*)
us,

us, who *sat in Darkness, and in the Shadow of Death*; to protect us under his Feathers, and guard us beneath the Covering of his Wings, that we might neither be afraid of the Terror by night; nor of the Arrow that flieth by Day; nor of any of the fiery Darts of the Wicked; that He came to arm us with the Shield of Faith, with the Breast-plate of righteousness, with Wisdom from above, and the Helmet of Salvation, that the Devil our spiritual Adversary, that goeth about like a roaring Lion, seeking whom he may devour, may neither approach to hurt us, nor with his subtle Wiles deceive us into Perdition.

As soon as He began to increase in *Wisdom and Stature*, He began to go about his Father's Business, to promote the Glory of God, and the Welfare of Mankind: at twelve years old He was found in the Temple in the midst of the learned Doctors of the Law, both hearing them, and asking them Questions; and disputing with so much Judgment, as made all that heard him astonished at his Understanding and Answers, so that even then it might have been truly said, that a greater than Solomon was there.

And as He farther advanced in Years, He began to preach to all Persons, at all Times and in all Places as occasion offered, in such a manner as was not below the highest, nor above the meanest Capacity; his Discourses were

were neither so vulgar as to be contemptible, nor so mysterious as to be unintelligible.

The deep things of God which He would have us believe, and the Duties which He would have us practice, He pointed out in easie Parables, obvious to the Mind, and engaging to the Affections. And tho', as God, He was above the Reach of all finite Understandings to comprehend, yet He so tempered the Knowledge of himself, of his own mysterious Nature, as to give bright and visible Indications enough to those *that sought him*, as God did heretofore to his Servant Moses, and to turn the Pillar of a Cloud to those *only who sought him not*, as He did to the Egyptians. For we find, that there is a due Proportion of Light in his Gospel, for those who above all things wish to see him; and a proper Mixture of Shade to those, who are of an opposite Disposition. Our Lord spoke with Brightness enough, to illuminate the elect, and with Obscurity enough to humble them; and with Obscurity enough to blind the Reprobate, and with Brightness enough to condemn them, and render them *without Excuse*.

And by his courteous Behaviour, as well as by his Sermons He gained the ignorant and unlearned, and conquered the obstinate Prejudice and Hardness of Heart, which many had unhappily imbibed from the corrupt
Glosses,

Glosses, and Interpretations of those of old Time, by the Power of his Gospel, and Demonstration of his Spirit, and prepared for them the Ways of the Lord, making those Paths straight, which the Scribes and Pharisees had made crooked.

And to promote the good of Men, He feared neither the Frowns, nor valued the Favours of this World: for He had Courage enough to reprove the haughty Pharisee, as well as Compassion to forgive the humble Sinner; and Integrity enough to censure and condemn the Faults of those, who would have taken him *by Force, and made him their King*; as well as of those, who *despitefully used him, and crucified him* as a Malefactor.

And *his Love was* so generous and universal, that He *preached the glad Tidings of Salvation to the poor*, as well as to the Rich: and communicated to them rather a larger Share of his spiritual Blessings, that He might the better support them under the Want of temporal Enjoyments: and delivered to all the saving Doctrines of Truth, *as one having Authority, and not as the Scribes*, but with such a resistless Conviction, as extorted this Confession from his Hearers, *that never Man spake like this Man.*

And to shew them, that He was no hypocritical Impostor, no false Pretender to Inspiration, no ravenous *Wolf in Sheep's Cloathing*, but a *Teacher sent from God*, the great
Father

Father of Light and Truth, *approved of God, anointed by him with the Oil of Gladness above his Fellows*, He confirmed his Mission from the eternal God, *by sundry Miracles wrought at sundry Times, and in divers Manners.*

And as his almighty Father created the Heaven and the Earth, and all things that are therein, by the Word of his Mouth, saying of all things that are, as He said of Light, *Let there be Light, and there was Light*, let every kind of thing be produced, and it was produced: so did our Lord, in like manner, heal the Diseases of the Body, as well as those of the Soul. *He spake, and it was done; He commanded, and was obeyed: I will be thou clean*, saith He to the Leper, *and immediately the Leper was cleansed.* By the same resistless Word He made *the deaf to hear, the dumb to speak, the blind to see, and the dead to rise and live.* *At his Rebuke the tempestuous Winds and Seas grew still and calm;* and at his Command even the Devils, tho' a Legion, were instantly dispossest.

And 'tis observable, that our Saviour's Miracles were no less Demonstrations of his diffusive Goodness, than of his almighty Power. But some perhaps will impiously or scrupulously object and say, did not our Saviour permit the Devils, whom He cast out of the Man which *dwelt among the Tombs, to enter*

into a Herd of Swine, and drive them down a Precipice into the Deep? and did He not curse the Fig-tree which bore no Fruit, so that it straitway dried up from the Roots? and do not these Instances seem, rather to attest his Power than his Goodness? and that upon a Disappointment, or an Indignity received, He could be fired with Indignation and Resentment?

As to these (which, with many other mighty Works of our Saviour, have been lately defended by some brave Heroes of the Christian Faith, from all the insolent and blasphemous Attacks of our modern Infidels, with such judicious Criticism, Strength of Reason, and Light of Truth, as justly entitles those worthy Champions to an equal, if not a superior Praise to that which the antient Apologists have merited of the Church) if we duly consider it, they will appear to have been no less the Acts of Grace, than of Omnipotence.

For as our Saviour was, on account of his divine Nature, Lord of the Universe, He had an absolute Right to permit *the Devils to enter into the Swine, and drown them in the Deep*; and since the stupid Gadarenes, notwithstanding they had seen what was done *to the Man possess'd with an unclean Spirit, prefer'd their Swine to their Saviour, for they prayed him to depart out of their Coasts*; great there-

therefore was his Mercy toward them, in that He suffered not *the Legion of Devils*, to enter into, and take possession of them also, as well as He did of their Swine.

And as to his *cursing the barren Fig-tree*, that was a Lesson, not only of his absolute Dominion, but of kind Instruction and Caution to his Followers, whereby He shewed them, what *the Hearers, and not the Doers of his Word*, what such *unprofitable Servants* must expect.

It was also a Mark of his just Displeasure against the Jews, who were taught by this Miracle wrought on *the barren Fig-tree*, that the Gospel would be removed from them, and that (for their rejecting it) they would be left to their own *unfruitful Works of Darkness*, and consigned over to Destruction, to wither away as a Nation, and *be dried up from the Roots*.

Unreasonable therefore were the impious Cavils of a late ridiculous Blasphemer, who grew mad against the Lord and his Christ, because not preferr'd in his Church, boldly asserting, that this Action of Jesus, was not to be accounted for, because it was to the Destruction of another Man's harmless and inoffensive Tree; not considering that every Creature is God's absolute Property, and that for him, according as He shall think fit, to execute Punishment upon Persons or Things, such

is an Action consistent with his Perfections; such as answers to the Character of God, as a good and gracious Being; and shews his Love to Mankind, and his Inclination to do them good, which are some of the Rules of judging by whom Miracles are performed.

But to proceed, In our Saviour's Person *the Wisdom of the Serpent* was mixt with *the Innocence of the Dove*; there was *no Guile found in his Mouth*, nor Malice or Rancour in any of his Actions. Tho' our Lord had all Power committed to him in Heaven and on Earth, yet He never abused it to Oppression or Tyranny, nor made it the Instrument of Revenge or Cruelty: nay, He hath taught and commanded us, and chose rather himself to suffer, than to return Injuries, and told his Disciples, *who would have called down Fire from Heaven to consume the inhospitable Samaritanes, that they knew not what Spirit they were of, that He was come, not to destroy, but to save Men's Lives.*

Tho' He was oftentimes much more highly provoked by others, than by those Samaritanes; tho' He was seized, and dragg'd away to the High Priest's Palace by an impious Rabble, falsely accused, and unjustly condemned: For Pilate his Judge said to his Accusers; *I have examined him before you, and have found no Fault in him, touching those things whereof ye accuse him; no, nor yet Herod, For*

I sent you to him, and lo, nothing worthy of Death is done unto him; tho' he was buffeted, spit upon, and reviled, crown'd with Thornes, and a contemptible Reed put into his Hand for a Sceptre, and fastned to the Cross, and crucified between two Thieves; yet He returned not Railing for Railing, Evil for Evil, but contrariwise Blessing, and pray'd for those his Murderers, saying, Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.

And it is observable, that not one of all our Saviour's good Actions was done to serve any worldly Interest or Design: for as the Sun freely communicates its Light and Heat to the Earth, without receiving any mutual Benefit to itself; so did Christ, *the Sun of Righteousness*, wherever He went, breath Health and Recovery, with all manner of Blessings, among the Children of Men, without any Reward received from them. The Fee for all his Cares, was Want and Indigence; while *the Birds of the Air had their Nests, and Foxes their Holes to creep in; the Son of Man had not where to lay his Head*: Nor was Fame and Honour the Bait that allured him; for tho' the Multitude sang their *Hosanna's to the Son of David*, yet they more often called him *a Wine-bibber and a Glutton; a Friend of Publicans and Sinners; a Deceiver actuated and moved by Beelzebub, the Prince of the Devils*.

And

And as for Pleasure and Effeminacy, He was so far from courting it, that his whole Life was one continued Miracle of Austerity, Fasting, and Praying, of long Journeys, and course Receptions; in a Word, all his Days were spent in the Acts of the greatest Love and Charity to the Bodies and Souls of Men. While He lived, He was perpetually doing good, and when He died, He earnestly pray'd for the good, not only of his Friends, but his greatest Enemies.

Such was his Innocence, He could defy the World to prove him guilty of the least Crime; for saith He to the Jews, who were incensed against him, *who is there amongst you, that convinces me of Sin* *.

And such was the Efficacy of his Doctrine and Piety, that they were forc'd to own, as of his Words, so also of his Works, *that never Man spake, nor did like this Man.*

* John 8. 46.

II. *The Example of Christ.*

S E R M O N X.

A C T S X. 38.

Who went about doing Good.

IN the preceding Discourse I propos'd,

- I. *First*, to set before you the most excellent Example of our Saviour, summ'd up in the Words of my Text, (viz.) *who went about doing good.*
- II. *Secondly*, to convince you of the reasonableness of the Duty implied, viz. our Imitation of our Lord's Example.
And,
- III. *Lastly*, conclude with a few Reflections from the whole.

The *First* of these is set forth at large, in the foregoing Discourse; and therefore I proceed now to my

Second

Second Particular, which is to endeavour to convince you of the Reasonableness of the Duty implied, (viz.) our Imitation of our Lord's Example.

But before I do this, I think it proper to premise, that the Actions of our Saviour were either such as were done by him, as He was God of the Substance of the Father, begotten before the Worlds; or such as were done by him, as Man of the Substance of his Mother, born in the World. Of the former Sort were his miraculous Works, which were the divine Credentials of his Word and Mission from the Father; of the latter were his extensive Love and Charity for all Mankind, that all Men might come to the Knowledge of his Truth, and be saved; his Meekness and Humility; his Temperance and Patience; and all his other moral Vertues; which, in him, were without any base Allay, or Mixture of Vice.

For He was a second Adam, without any of the sinful Imperfections of the first: such Vertues as these, which were the Ornaments, of our Saviour's Life, are prescribed to our Imitation, that they may be the Ornaments of ours: Christ doth not require Impossibilities of us, to work Miracles as He did; but *to do Justice, to love Mercy, and to walk humbly with our God.* He does not, like the Egyptian Task-masters, command us, as they did
the

the Israelites, *to make Brick without Straw*; but saith to us all, *Take my Yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in Heart, and ye shall find rest unto your Souls; for my Yoke is easy, and my Burden is Light.*

The Yoke and Burden, which He requires us to bear, is to govern our Lives according to those holy Rules which He hath taught us, in conformity to that perfect Pattern, which He hath set us, *by his own Example.* Wherefore to imitate Christ, is to lead a Christian Life, which, as St Peter excellently describes it*, *is to add to our Faith, Vertue; and to Vertue, Knowledge; and to Knowledge, Temperance; and to Temperance, Patience; and to Patience, Godliness; and to Godliness, brotherly Kindness; and to brotherly Kindness, Charity.* For, saith he, *if these things be in you, and abound, they make you, that ye shall neither be barren, nor unfruitful in the Knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.* Whose Example we ought to follow,

First, because it is a sure and infallible Rule, whereas the Example of the best of Men is in many things deficient: for these, notwithstanding all their Care, have their Failings and Faults, as well as their Vertues and Graces; because the Fountain of original Corruption, (from which no mere Man, since Adam's Fall, is exempt) will frequently

* 2 Epist. 1.

send forth some Streams which are impure ; hence the Fire of Lust cannot be so entirely quenched, but it will sometimes blaze, or smoke out in filthy Exhalations : nor can the Passions of Anger, Grief, and Fear, be always so well managed, but they will sometimes break through the Rules of Prudence and Decency ; and betray the Madman, Coward, and Fool : and in like manner we see other Passions prevail, and too often triumph over Reason, inspite of all the Admonitions of Conscience, and the Motions of the Holy Spirit.

The Truth of this is too evident to be denied ; for we find in sacred Writ, that the Saints of God are no less remarkable for their sinful Miscarriages, than they were for their Vertues ; for we read, that even *the Father of the Faithful* could equivocate ; that Moses could be transported into a Passion ; and that his Brother Aaron made a Molten Calf, an Idol for the People to worship ; that *the Man after God's own heart* fell a Prey to his wanton Passions ; that when our Lord was betrayed into the hands of Sinners, St Peter, notwithstanding his boasted Confidence, denied him ; and that all the rest forsook him, and fled.

In all these Instances, we see their vertuous Characters stained with sinful Imperfections, but none of these are to be found in our
Lord's

Lord's Example: no, *the Root and Offspring of David* was that *bright and morning Star*, in which were no Spots to obscure or eclipse its Glory. For God *would not suffer his holy One to see Corruption*, any more in a moral, than He did in a natural Sense. Christ indeed condescends to call us *his Brethren*, because he assumed our Flesh, and *was like unto us in all things*, but *Sin*, which was *excepted*; and that no tyrannical Powers of Men or Devils could force, nor all the proffered Kingdoms of the World, nor Glory of them, could tempt, him to be guilty of. So that it is our bounden duty and Happiness to imitate the Example of Christ to the utmost of our Power, because we are sure not to be deceived.

But in imitating the Examples of other Men, we must have regard to the Advice of St Paul to the Corinthians, saying, *Be ye Followers of me, as I am of Christ*. Whom we are also bound to imitate for this further Reason, (*viz.*) because our Lord, in many of his Actions, proposed no other End, *but our Imitation*.

For why was he *baptized, and washed in the Laver of Regeneration*, who had no Pollutions either original or actual to be purged of; but to teach us to observe the Sacrament of Baptism, that our Sins might be mystically washed away, by the sanctified Waters of that holy Ordinance? Why did he fast, whose

Soul was always warm'd with fervent Zeal, and burn'd with no Desires, but what were pure and chaste as the Flames of the holy Altar; but to teach us, by Abstinence and fasting, to mortify those Lusts, which war against the Soul; Why did he condescend *to eat with Publicans and Sinners, and to wash his Disciples Feet*; but that *we should learn of him to be meek and lowly in heart, to do all good Offices to our Brethren, and love one another, as he hath loved us?*

But *Secondly*, we ought to imitate the Example of our Lord in doing good, because to do good is the End of all the several Blessings which God hath conferr'd upon us. As Nature produceth nothing barely for Shew and Ornament, but for Use; so doth the God of Nature work his several Graces in us, not only to shew his Wisdom and Power, but to display his Goodness, in that He thereby fits us to promote the mutual Welfare of each other.

If God placed the great Luminaries of the World in the Firmament of Heaven, that *the one might rule the Day, and the other the Night*: shall we think, that those excellent Talents, which are committed to some Men, were designed only *to be laid up in a Napkin, or hid under a Bushel?* No, it is God's Intention, because it is his Command, and therefore the
Duty

Duty of all those to whom *God hath committed much, that their Light should shine before Men, that they seeing,* and enjoying the Fruits of their good Works, might by a generous Emulation, and grateful Returns of Praise, *glorify their Father which is in Heaven.*

But not only the Intent of the Giver, but also the Nature and Quality of those Gifts which God hath bestowed upon us, call upon us for Employment, for our own Benefit and that of others. For while some things by use are diminished and impaired, these like the Widow's Oil are continually encreased and improved: for he that is a Guide to the ignorant, and instructeth them in the ways of Wisdom, improves their Understanding, but looseth none of his own; nay, so far is he from suffering thereby, that his moral and intellectual Faculties are the more enlarged; his own Lamp, by giving Light to his Neighbour, burns the brighter; and his own Vertues take the deeper Root in him, and like a good Tree, bloom and flourish the more. For as the miraculous Bread, in the Gospel, was multiplied by Distribution; or as the Seed brings forth Increase, not by being hoarded up, but by being scattered upon the Earth; so the righteous Man's Talent by use is secured from Rust and Canker, and receives great Addition; *the two Talents become four, and the five ten.*

Whereas

Whereas they, who neglect the Practice, will soon also lose the Power of doing Good, because Growth and Improvement is the very Effence of Morality; there being no middle State, between not advancing and receding; no middle Season, between its Spring and Fall.

Wherefore let all idle and *unprofitable Servants* consider, that the Curse on the barren Fig-tree, (*cut it down, why cumbreth it the Ground?*) attends them: and that they are in great danger of being *cast into outer Darknes*, where is *weeping and gnashing of Teeth*.

The last Motive of doing good, which I shall here mention, is, that it is a most generous and pleasant Employment. He that hoards up his Treasures, and will not, out of his Abundance, supply the Wants of others; being deaf and inexorable to all the piteous Cries of pinching Necessity, is justly reputed a Scandal and Reproach to Humanity; and may be compared to the Devil, whose Character is *the Destroyer*; or to the Grave, which turns all it receives into Rottenness and Corruption: but he, whose Ears, and Heart, and Purse are open, and whose Hand is extended to succour the poor and distress'd, procures *a Name more sweet than precious Ointment*; and is the Love of Men, and Favourite of Heaven;

Heaven; and is like his heavenly Father, *who is loving to every Man, and whose tender Mercies are over all his Works.*

Add to this, that without Goodness, all other Graces, how excellent soever they be in themselves, are nothing worth: for, saith the Apostle, *tho' I speak with the Tongue of Men and Angels, and have not Charity, or Goodness, I am become as sounding Brass, or a tinkling Cymbal: and tho' I have the Gift of Prophecy, and understand all Mysteries, and all Knowledge; and tho' I have all Faith, so that I could remove Mountains, and have not Charity, I am nothing.*

Nor is the Exercise of Goodness less pleasant than generous. When we do good to our Neighbour in Affliction, we act the Part of the *good Samaritan*; we do as we would be done by, and consequently make our Neighbour's Case our own; and so in effect, by relieving him, we relieve ourselves, and turn our Pity to his Calamities into Joy for his Deliverance; a Joy which is full and pure, far surpassing all the Pleasures of Sense, whose sweetest Draughts generally leave behind them a bitter Farewell; and so short lived those Pleasures are, that they expire, even while they satisfy. Whereas the Pleasures of doing good, not only give sincere Delight in the Performance, but revive again and improve

prove upon Reflection, and tho' the good Man's Works are sometimes *done in secret*, yet the Euge bone, *well done thou good and faithful Servant*, which God, *who seeth in secret*, speaks to his Soul, is more harmonious than the Trumpet's Sound, or the Applause of Men: his good Deeds authorize his Conscience, not only to acquit, but to speak comfortably to him: nor does it only whisper, but proclaim a Jubilee to his Soul; even in this Life it gives him a Foretaste of Heaven, and covering *a Multitude of Sins*, seals to him that *Peace of God, which passeth all Understanding*.

I proceed now in the *last* Place to make two or three Reflections, and so conclude.
And

First, if to imitate our Lord in doing good is a most delightful, excellent, and necessary Duty. How much do those deserve Censure and Reproof, who either spend their Days in Idleness, or in the sensual Pleasures of this Life, that is in doing nothing, or in doing what is worse? For they live not as becometh Members of Society, and Stewards to God, but as if they were born only to themselves; not considering how they violate the Laws of God and Man, and what a poor Account they will be able to give hereafter, at the
grand

grand Audit, for thus trifling away their Time in Vanity and Folly.

Nor do those deserve any less Rebuke, who, tho' not dissolv'd in Idleness and Luxury, yet think they may be excused their Duty to their Neighbour, by practising their Duty towards God: for this Pretence of theirs, as the Apostle argues, is a Contradiction; for *how can he love God, whom he hath not seen, who loves not his Brother, whom he hath seen?* God will not be served by halves; He requires our Obedience to the Commandments of the second Table, as well as to those of the first; and hath told us, that he who wilfully *offends in one Point is guilty of all*; and therefore such Worshippers of God do but mock and provoke him.

And notwithstanding all their outward Acts of Piety towards God, yet for want of Charity towards Man, they are not so much as like *King Agrippa*, who was but *almost a Christian*; because they want the essential Mark of Christianity, which is Love to the Brethren; for *by this*, saith our Lord, *shall all Men know that ye are my Disciples, if ye love one another.*

But there is a third sort of Men much worse than these I have already mentioned, such as we cannot think of without Horror and Indignation; for they are such Enemies

to all Goodness, that the last finishing Stroke of the Devil's Image seems to have been drawn upon their Souls: for they, instead of imitating our Lord's Example in *going about to do good*, make it their Business to do as much Mischief as they can: they *deny the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord that bought them*, burlesque his Word, ridicule his Miracles, and profanely despise his holy Institutions; and that they may diffuse amongst Men their Malice against God and Goodness, they labour to instil the poisonous Rudiments of Vice into the unwary, to catechise them in the Mystery of Iniquity, that they may confirm them in an incorrigible State of Sin and Debauchery: for which Purpose they spare no Pains, *encompass Sea and Land to make Profelytes*, such as they would have, if possible, ten-fold more the Children of Hell, than themselves.

Hence we see how these Men, by deviating from the Example of our Lord, make themselves *Children of the Devil*: and therefore let us closely follow our Lord's Example, that we may become *Children of God*.

To conclude. Let the glorious Light of our Lord's Example inform and direct our Understandings, and let its admirable Beauty inflame our Will and Affections to copy after it, and to excite our Diligence and Resolution herein.

Let

Let us consider, that our Lord after a Life spent *in doing good, went into the Holy of Holies, a Building not made with hands, eternal in the Heavens:* and we may assure ourselves, that if *we tread in his Steps, those everlasting Doors, which let the King of Glory in,* shall not be shut against us; for He hath told us, *that where He is, all good Christians, all his faithful Followers, shall be also.*

SER-

*The Meekness and Humility
of Christ.*

S E R M O N XI.

M A T T. XI. 29.

*Learn of me, for I am meek and
lowly in heart.*

TH E S E Vertues of Meekness and Humility are the Foundation and Perfection of all good Qualities, moral or divine; they both dispose to, and crown our intellectual Acquisitions; from these all other Vertues receive a becoming Grace, and without these, tho' never so beautiful in themselves, they loose their Lustre, and forfeit our Esteem: whereas their opposite Vices, Anger and Pride, bar the Soul from Wisdom and Understanding, for they raise about and cover her with such a thick Mist, or rather a dark Cloud, which
no

no Rays of Light and Truth, without a Miracle, can penetrate: hence Solomon saith, that *Anger resteth in the bosom of Fools*; and that *there is more hope of a Fool, than of a proud Man, a Man wise in his own Conceit.*

It was Passion and Pride that induced the Athenian Philosophers to reject and despise St Paul's *preaching of Jesus, and the Resurrection*, and to say scornfully of his Person, *what will this Babler say?*

And it was in a great Measure the same Principle that made the Jews slight even the gracious Doctrine and Person of our blessed Lord; for say they, *whence hath this Man these Things?* and *what Wisdom is this, which is given unto him, that even such mighty Works are wrought by his hands?* *is not this the Carpenter, the Son of Mary, the Brother of James and Joses, and of Judah and Simeon?* and *are not his Sisters here with us?* and *they were offended at him*: and induced also the chief Priests and Pharisees to reply to Nicodemus, who had the honesty to say in Defence of our Saviour, *doth our Law judge any Man before it hear him, and know what he doth?* *art thou also of Galilee, search and look, for out of Galilee ariseth no Prophet?*

For this Reason, because Meekness and Humility were absolutely necessary for his Servants to be *clothed therewith*, that they might be true professors of his holy Religion, with
which

which inordinate Passion and Pride are utterly inconsistent, our Lord saith to all his Followers, *learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart.*

Learn of me, for these Vertues of Meekness and Humility are by no means so effectually to be learnt in the Schools of the Philosophers, as in the School of Christ: for tho' they urged other Vertues as necessary to compleat the Character of their Hero, yet they excluded Meekness and Humility, as mean and unworthy of it. But our Saviour, *a far greater and wiser* than they, makes those Vertues the distinguishing Ornaments and Glory of his Disciples: and *tho' they were hidden to,* or rather despised by, *those wise and prudent,* yet He hath made them an essential Part of his Religion, and recommended them to the Practise of his Followers, by his Word and Example. *Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart.*

These Words are an Exhortation, or rather a Command, because they are his Words, who *had all Power and Authority committed to him in Heaven and in Earth,* to learn and practise the Duties of Meekness and Humility; and they point out the Way and Means, whereby we may attain the Knowledge of, and be enabled to practise them, (viz.) the Example of Christ, *Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly.*

In treating of these Words, I shall endeavour,

First,

First, to shew wherein the Vertues of Meekness and Humility do consist.

Secondly, that our Saviour was a most perfect Pattern, or consummate Example of these Vertues. And

Lastly, what Influence the Example of Christ hath, or ought to have, to excite us to the Practice of the same.

First, I am to shew wherein the Vertues of Meekness and Humility do consist; the first of these, (viz.) Meekness is opposed to Anger, and signifies a Slowness to Wrath; not that Anger is in itself a Sin, or that an utter Insensibility of Injuries and Affronts offered were a Vertue; for we may be assured from the Apostle's Advice, that we may *be angry and sin not*, and in some Cases, if we are insensible of the Injuries done to our greatest Friends, and do not shew our Displeasure and Resentment, we shall be guilty of Sin, because we do not *tread in his Steps, who knew no Sin*; for He severely rebuked the Scribes, Pharisees and Hypocrites, for their abominable Wickedness, and shew'd his utmost Detestation against their Villany, by the many repeated Woes He denounced against them.

And when He saw those that *sold Oxen, Sheep and Doves in the Temple of Jerusalem*, his righteous Soul was so provoked, that He *scourged*

scourged both them and their Beasts out of that sacred Place; overthrew the Tables of the Money-Changers, and the Seats of them that sold Doves, and said unto them, it is written, my House shall be call'd the House of Prayer; but ye have made it a Den of Thieves.

Hence we learn, that we may be angry and sin not, and that in some cases it is our bounden Duty to express our warmest resentments; because He, *who was like unto us in all things, Sin only excepted*, express'd his high Displeasure against those, who presumed to blaspheme the Name of God, and profane those places, that were dedicated to his Honour; and because He tells us, that in such Cases, *if his Disciples should hold their Peace, the very Stones would immediately cry out.*

Wherefore this Vertue of Meekness doth by no means forbid a pious and well govern'd Zeal, for the Honour of God, and his holy Religion, which He hath mercifully reveal'd to us, but only checks and restrains the inordinate and ridiculous transports of blind Rage and Fury, which we are but too apt to expose ourselves to upon every, tho' never so slight, a Provocation.

If the Affronts or Injuries that are offered to us, are trivial and of little consequence, this Vertue of Meekness enables us calmly to overlook and despise them, as beneath our Notice; and if they are of so provoking a Nature,

ture, as to deserve our Animadversion, yet it teaches us to keep our Anger within the Bounds of Reason, and will not suffer our Resentments to arise or exceed either in Proportion or Duration, the Nature of the Offence given; not will it *let the Sun to go down upon our wrath.* It will not suffer us, like *Haman*, to prepare for *Mordecai* a Gallows of *fifty Cubits high*, for the Omission of a little Ceremony; nor like the *Prophet Jonah*, to *say unto the God of Heaven*, who expostulating with him about the loss of the Gourd, which he had raised to shade and cool his hot and angry Head, ask'd whether *he did well to be angry*, that *he did well to be angry, even unto Death.*

No, these Extremes of Madnes and Folly are entirely prevented or suppress'd by the Vertue of Meekness, which is always more apt to dispose us to forgive and forget, than to resent and revenge any Injuries or Indignities offered to us, and being directed by Reason enlightned by Scripture, will never suffer us to murmur and repine at the wise Dispensations of Providence, but will dispose us to submit to them, how grievous and Afflicting soever they may appear, and to say with our blessed Lord in his last dying Agonies, *not my Will, but thine be done.*

And as Meekness will not permit us indecently and furiously to resent and return Af-

fronts and Injuries, much less will it allow us, in such wrongful Dealings to be the Aggressors: For Meekness, like that most excellent Gift, *the Gift of Charity, the very Bond of Peace and of all Vertues, suffereth long and is kind, doth not behave itself unseemly seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked; but beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things, vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up,* because she is always attended with that *Twin Sister* of hers, Humility.

This is a Vertue opposed to Pride, and signifies a Medium between the two Extreames, either of a too much dejected and dispirited, or of an overfond and conceited Opinion of ourselves; the Extream in Defect is perhaps rather a Disease of the Body, than a Sin of the Soul; being rarely to be found but among those who are of a crazy Constitution, or of a distempered Brain.

But the Extreme in Excess, an overfond conceited Opinion of ourselves, Pride of Heart, was the Original, and too often is the actual Poison of our Nature; it was Pride that cast *Lucifer*, that *Son of the Morning* out of Heaven, and our first Parents out of Paradise; *He said in his heart, I will ascend above the height of the Clouds, exalt my Throne above the Stars of God, and will be like the most High:* And they in like manner, by his Temptation, aspiring to be as Gods *knowing Good*

Good and Evil, arrived to no higher Perfection in Knowledge, than that of Good lost, and Evil gained: and we all of us are naturally prone to this *Similitude of their Transfession*.

And to correct this poisonous *Leaven*, and cure this hereditary Disease, our blessed Lord prescribes the Vertue of Humility; *learn of me, for I am meek and lowly*: He who was the Son of God, and Son of Man; who was the Son of the Highest, and Servant of the lowest, hath therefore taught us, that Humility suiteth and becometh every Condition, and that it is no less consistent with the Grandure of a Prince, than with the mean Estate of a Peasant: and since we read, that because our Saviour *humbled himself, and became obedient to Death, even the Death of the Cross; God therefore so highly exalted him, that He gave him a Name, above every Name, and that at the Name of Jesus every Knee should Bow, and that every Tongue should confess, that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the Glory of God the Father*; we are taught, that he that *abaseth himself, shall be exalted, and that he that exalteth himself, shall be abased*.

A remarkable Instance of which was King Nebuchadnezzar, who, thro' Pride not knowing that *the most High ruleth in the Kingdom of Men, was driven from Men, and did eat Grass as the Oxen, and his Body was wet with*

the Dew of Heaven, 'till being fully humbled by a Sense of his brutal Condition, his Honour, Brightness and Majesty returned together with his Reason, which excited him to praise the most High, and to acknowledge, that *He doeth according to his Will, in the Army of Heaven, and among the Inhabitants of the Earth*, and that those who walk in Pride, He is able to abase.

Wherefore He that is *clothed with Humility*, will, whatever his Condition is, or his Circumstances are, think of himself, as he ought to think: if he is mighty and powerful, he glories not in his Strength; for he knows *that the Race is not to the Swift, nor the Battle to the Strong*; and that there are many Creatures of an inferior Order, that as much exceed him in Strength, as he does them in Understanding.

Is he wise and prudent, he knoweth that Wisdom and Prudence are *Gifts from above*, and that they *come down from the Father of Lights*; that *Paul may plant, and Apollos water*, but that it is God alone, that giveth the Increase.

Doth he abound in Grace, the more will he abound in Humility, and tho' he were *highly favoured with Visions and Revelations of the Lord*, yet of himself he will not glory, but only of his own Infirmities.

Is he possessed with Wealth, he glories not
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in his Riches; for he considers them, not as the Effects of his own Industry, but as the Gifts of God, whose Steward he is to employ them, not only for himself, but for the good of his Brethren, and the Honour of God, to whom he *must give an Account of his Stewardship.* And if he be deprived of them, not by his own Mismanagement and luxurious Folly, but by the Fraud or Rapine of other Men, he can be content with or without them, and can say with Job, *the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the Name of the Lord.*

Is he advanced to honour, he carries himself with that decency and obliging Behaviour, that he engages and wins the Affections of all about him, and reflects a brighter Lustre upon the Station he is raised to, than he receives from it; while others being in Honour, through Pride and Insolence, *may be compar'd to the Beasts that perish.*

He that is truly humble, never uses any outward shew of it, as a disguise to cover or carry on any mischievous Design, like the ungodly Man mention'd Psalm. 10. *who falleth down and humbleth himself, that the Congregation of the Poor may fall into the Hands of his Captains:* nor when he goes up to the Temple to pray, will he boastingly say with the proud Pharisee, *God, I thank thee, I am not as other Men are, Extortioners, Unjust, Adulterers; I fast*

fast twice in the Week, I give Tithes of all that I possess; but will rather with the poor Publican scarce lift up his Eyes to Heaven, but smite upon his Breast, and say, Lord, be merciful to me a Sinner.

The humble Man is so far from flandering or detracting from the good Name of other Men, that he is always more ready to prefer others before himself in honour. And when he doeth his Alms, he doth not sound a Trumpet before him, as the Hypocrites do, in the Synagogues, and in the Streets, that they may have Glory of Men; but he letteth not his left Hand know what his right Hand doth; he doeth it in secret, because his Father, which seeth in secret, will reward him openly. Nor when his Counsel is rejected or defeated will he be enraged like Achitophel, who, in such a Case, saddled his Ass, set his House in Order, and went and hanged himself.

To conclude this Point, the humble Man loves not to exercise himself in Matters that be too high for him, because his Soul is even as a weaned Child; nor will he ever pretend to censure what he doth not understand, or disbelieve what he cannot comprehend; for he believes God to be wiser than himself, and therefore he will not idolize his Reason to gratify his Conceit, nor dispute against the profound Mysteries of Religion to indulge his Fancy.

Hence

Hence he will neither invade the Office of the Prince or Prelate, nor boldly prescribe Laws to the State, or Ceremonies to the Church, nor condemn and reject those that are significant and useful, which are legally established by the Authority of both; but quietly submits his own opinion to the wiser Counsels of his Superiours, thereby as much as in him lies supporting both, in the Bond of Peace, unity, and Concord.

Having thus shewn wherein the Vertues of Meekness and Humility do consist, I proceed to my

Second Particular, viz. to shew that our Saviour was a most perfect Pattern, or consummate example of those Vertues.

That we may form a clear and distinct Idea of our Saviour's Meekness and Humility, I shall briefly consider his Person, and particularly those Actions, which relate to these Vertues. As to his Person, he is stil'd by St Luke, *the Glory of Israel, and the Desire of all Nations*; by St Paul, *the Head of all Principalities and Powers; the Brightness of God's Glory, and the express Image of his Person, in whom all the Fulness of the Godhead dwelt bodily*: and St John stiles him, *the Word, that was with God, and which was God*; and tells us, that *that Word was made Flesh, and dwelt among us full of Grace and Truth.*

And

And when *that Word was made Flesh*, when He was first born into the World, though *the Heaven of Heavens was not able to contain him*, He had no better place afforded him, wherein to lay, than a Manger: and no sooner was He come into the World, but jealous Herod thought, by a religious Artifice, to have thrust him out; and yet the meek and humble Jesus chose rather to save himself by Flight, than by punishing his malicious Cruelty with Death.

And as He advanced *in Wisdom and Stature*, so did He in the continual Exercise of the Vertues of Meekness and Humility; tho' He *was Heir and Lord of all*, yet He had not so much, *as where to lay his sacred Head*; tho' He could *command the Cattle on a thousand Hills*, and take up *the Ocean in the hallow of his Hand*; tho' He could work Miracles to supply the Hunger and Thirst of Thousands of his Followers, yet He himself frequently submitted to Hunger and Thirst, and all other Necessities of Nature.

Tho' the Devil and the Jews were continually plotting to blast his good Name, and take away his Life, yet not all their cruel Artifices, nor malicious Indignities could provoke him to betray the least Indecencies of irregular Passion. His Enemies injuriously persecuted and cursed him, but He graciously *blessed, and pray'd for them*: they called him
a Glut-

a Glutton and a Wine-bibber, who was a Miracle of Abstinence and Austerity: a Friend, or an Associate in the Iniquities, of Publicans and Sinners, who knew no Sin: a Deceiver, who was Truth itself, and knew no Guile: as the Devil's Agent, who came to destroy his Works: yet not all these Reproaches of their false Tongues, not all these Words of their deadly Hatred, could move him to discover any Sign of present Uneasiness, or future Revenge. He wrought many Miracles to heal the Sick, and to do good to all that needed his Assistance; yet never wrought one to make a Man lame or blind, or to be revenged of an Enemy.

When his Disciples would have *call'd down Fire from Heaven to consume the inhospitable Samaritans*, He meekly check'd their angry Zeal, and calmly restrain'd their unadvised Passion, telling them, that *they knew not what Spirit they were of, and that the Son of Man came not to destroy, but to save Men's Lives*. These were great and glorious Instances of Meekness and Humility; but are not to be compared to those much more stupendous Acts, manifested in the last Scene of his Life, at his Passion and Death, for then those Virtues were so much the more conspicuous, because then they met with the greatest Opposition, and severest Trial.

To the treacherous Judas, who had basely

delivered him into *the hands of Sinners*, He gives no other Language, than *Friend, Wherefore art thou come, and betrayest thou the Son of Man with a Kiss*; and when Peter cowardly denied him, He upbraids him, not with his Apostacy, but only looks him into Repentance, and with an Eye of Pity and Compassion, makes him *go out, and weep bitterly*.

Our Lord foresaw the Perfidy of Judas, knew that he was a covetous abandon'd Wretch, and that for *thirty Pieces of Silver* he would *betray him*; and therefore said of him before, *good were it for that Man, had he never been born*: But as to Peter, He withdrew his Grace a while, and suffered him to fall, to mortify his boasted Confidence; but knowing the Honesty of his Heart, notwithstanding the Infirmary of his Nature, He kindly took him again into Favour.

But let us behold the Saviour of the World retired to *Mount Olivet*, when his Hour was come, and He was to be delivered into the Hands of Sinners: Here we see him patiently labouring under the heavy Weight, not of his own, but of all the Sins of Mankind; meekly suffering, for their imputed Sins, the inexpressible Pains and Horrors of divine Vengeance, when *all the Storms of his Father's Wrath went over him*: here we see him for a while struggling under such amazing Agonies, as cast his Body into that prodigious Sweat, that *made his*

his Apparel red, and dyed all his Garments with Blood, that made the Man of God's own right Hand, the Man made strong for that very Purpose, to pray his Father, that if it were possible, that bitter Cup might pass from him, and made it as it were necessary, that an Angel should descend from Heaven to support and strengthen him : But He patiently bears the afflicting hand of God, and meekly and humbly says, not my Will, but thine be done.

This was the bloody Prelude to his further Sufferings ; and while the *full Vials of God's Wrath* were poured upon him, great was his Patience, Meekness, and Humility ; but yet these Vertues appear more wonderful and amazing, if we consider, how He, who made, now rules, and will hereafter judge the World, could meekly submit, for all the good Offices He had done, to be *apprehended with Swords and Staves*, like a Malefactor, by his sinful Creatures, a tumultuous Multitude ; to be accused, as a *Mover of Sedition*, who was the *Prince of Peace* ; to be scourged, as a Slave, who was *King of the Jews* ; to be condemn'd by Pilate, tho' he could find no Fault in him ; to be held in Derision, array'd with a scarlet Robe, whose *Garment is Light* ; to wear a *Crown of Thorns*, who was wont to wear a *Crown of Glory* ; to have a contemptible *Reed put into his Hand for a Sceptre*, who was *King of Kings, and Lord of Lords* ; finally, to be reviled and

mock'd by the chief Priests and Elders, and at length spit upon, buffeted, insulted and crucified by an impious Rabble; and yet for all these barbarous Indignities, like as a Lamb that is brought to the Slaughter, or as a Sheep before his Shearers is dumb, so He open'd not his Mouth, unless upon the Cross, when He pray'd for his Murderers, who so spitefully, maliciously, and cruelly used and persecuted him, saying, Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.

Having shewn that our Saviour was a perfect Pattern, and a most consummate Example of the Vertues of Meekness and Humility, I shall now proceed

Lastly, to shew, what Influence his Example hath, or ought to have upon our Practice.

His Example should excite us *to learn of him to be meek and lowly*, because He exhorts and requires us so to do: He requires it, *who was the Son of God*, as well as *the Son of Man*, who was our dearest Friend, who came down from Heaven to direct us in our Way thither, who laid down his Life, to save us from Death; who now is our powerful Advocate with the Father, to pardon our Sins, and to give us Grace, *to tread in his Steps*, and follow his Example.

He requires it of us, who will hereafter be our Judge, and reward us *according to the Fruit of our*

our Doings: and shall we refuse to *learn of him to be meek and lowly*? shall we be so ungrateful, as to disobey and displease our greatest Friend? so unkind to ourselves, as to provoke our Advocate with God, the Great Judge eternal, both of the Quick and Dead? But further, the Example of Christ should excite us to learn of him to be meek and lowly, because with regard to us, our Saviour could propose no other End of his Meekness and Humility, but our Imitation.

For why did He, with so much Meekness and Patience, bear the insolent Reproaches of the Scribes and Pharisees, the horrid Blasphemy and Contradiction of Sinners, the lying Accusation of *false Witnesses*? why did He suffer them to *spit in his Face, to buffet him, to be stricken with the Palms of their Hands*? and after many such vile Indignities, *to be nailed to the Cross*, and in the midst of his exquisite Torments, *to be mocked and reviled*? I say, why did He suffer these things, but that *the Scriptures might be fulfill'd*, and that we should learn of him, not only to love our Friends, but also *our Enemies, to bless those that curse us, and pray for those that despitefully treat us*?

Why did He condescend to be baptized, and wash'd in the Laver of Regeneration, who had no Pollutions either original or actual to be purged of? but to teach us humbly and
reve-

reverently to observe the Sacrament of Baptism, that our Sins might be mystically wash'd away by the sanctified Water of that holy Ordinance? why did He eat and converse with Publicans and Sinners, but to teach us, that *he that converteth a Sinner from the error of his Way, shall save a Soul from Death, and shall hide a multitude of Sins?* why did he condescend to wash his Disciples Feet, but to teach them, that they should not think it beneath them, to do all good Offices of Love and Kindness to the meanest of their Brethren, for saith our Lord, *I have given you an Example, that ye should do, as I have done to you.*

Finally the Example of our Lord should influence us, *to learn of him to be meek and lowly*; because He hath assured us, that in so doing *we shall find rest to our Souls*: And this the meek and lowly finds to be true by his own Experience; for his Soul is calm and undisturbed, fit for the Management of his own honest Vocation or Calling, and well disposed for the Service and Worship of God; he is content with, and easy under, whatever Station of Life Providence hath allotted him, without envying, or fretting himself, at the greater Riches, or Honours, some Men enjoy: he is easy to himself, easy to others, and acceptable to his God; hence he and his Conscience are at Peace, which not only is a continual Feast to him here, but gives him joyful Hopes,
and

and a good Assurance, of a blessed Immortality.

Whereas to proud and wrathful Men may be applied, that of the Prophet to the wicked in general, *there is no Peace, saith my God, to the wicked, the wicked are like the troubled Sea, when it cannot rest, whose Waters cast up Mire and Dirt*: a sad Prefage that unless they repent of their Pride and inordinate Passions, and learn of Christ *to be meek and lowly*, they shall never *find rest to their Souls*; never enter into that everlasting Rest, which God hath prepared for those only, that *follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth*.

The Sin of being ashamed of Christ.

S E R M O N XII.

M A R K VIII. 38.

Whoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and my Words in this adulterous and sinful Generation, of him also shall the Son of Man be ashamed, when he cometh in the Glory of his Father with his holy Angels.

THERE are two Passions, (viz.) Fear and Shame which are very apt to prevail with timorous and unstable Christians, to make them deny or be ashamed of the Faith, and the Cross of Christ, in the day of Temptation: Fear induced St Peter, notwithstanding his repeated Resolutions to the contrary, in *the Hall of*
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the High Priest, to deny his Lord; who suffer'd him to fall, as an Instance of human Frailty, and look'd him into Repentance, as an Instance of his great Compassion; because he knew the Sincerity of his Heart, and that he would one day have Courage enough, to seal and confirm the Truth of the Gospel with his Blood.

But as for the other Passion, that of Shame, with regard to Christ and his Word, we have no Instance in all the sacred Volumes of any good Man being guilty of it: for such a Shame is inconsistent with Goodness, and most certainly argues a Rottenness and Corruption of Heart.

'Tis no wonder therefore, if Men shall *be ashamed*, or think it beneath their Honour to confess the crucified Jesus, and acknowledge his Word *in this adulterous and sinful Generation*, that *the Son of Man should be ashamed of*, and much more think it beneath his Honour and Dignity, to own, in the Day of Judgment, when *He shall come in the Glory of his Father, with the holy Angels*, such unworthy and vile Professors of his Religion.

In discoursing on the Words of my Text, I shall endeavour to shew,

First, how, or when we may be said *to deny*, or *be ashamed of Christ, and his Words.*

Secondly, the Causes whence this Denial, or Shame proceeds.

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Thirdly,

Thirdly, the Effects thereof.

Fourthly, the Folly of it. And

Lastly, the Nature of the Punishment denounced against those who are guilty of it.

First then I am to shew, how, or when we may be said *to deny*, or *be ashamed of Christ*, and *his Words*.

Now this we may do in Thought, in Word, and in Deed. We deny him in Thought, whenever we entertain unworthy or profane Notions of the Dignity of his Person, the Nature of his Office, the Sanctity of his Actions, the Purity of his Example, or of the Wisdom and Authority of his Word. If therefore with Socinus or Arius we disbelieve his Divinity; if with the Scribes and Pharisees we persuade ourselves, that He was *a Deceiver*, and that He wrought his Miracles by *the Power of the Devil*; if in our Hearts we deny, that He was sent and commission'd by God the Father, to be our Prophet to teach us; our Priest, to pray and die for us; and our King, to rule and protect us: if we look upon his *lively Oracles of Truth*, to be an insignificant and *dead Letter*; if we prefer the glimmering Light of Reason, to the much superior Light of his Gospel: if in Comparison to the Duties of the moral Law, we despise and vilify his positive Institutions; if thus, or in this
like

like manner, we think of Christ and his Words, we then deny or despise him in our Thought; *But his Word, which is quick and powerful, sharper than any two edged Sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of the Soul and Spirit, and of the Joints and Marrow, which is also a Discerner of the Thoughts, and Intents of the Heart,* will, without Repentance, condemn us for it.

But this Denial of Christ and his Word in our Thoughts, tho' it be a great Wickedness, yet is exceeded,

Secondly, by our Denial, or being ashamed of him and his Gospel, by our Words: these are the Interpreters of our Minds; for as our Conceptions are the Images of Things, so our Words are the Images of our Conceptions; and if to deny Christ in these be an heinous Sin, to deny him also in our Words is yet a greater Aggravation thereof.

When erroneous or heretical Notions arise from Prejudice of Heart, they denote an Aversion or an Antipathy to Christ, and his gracious and saving Truths: but when we are so bold, as to utter them by our Mouth, we are said to *speake wicked Blasphemy against the most High.*

If, as our Saviour saith, *it is out of the Abundance of the Heart, that the Mouth speaketh;* 'tis a sure Sign that the Heart is exceeding full, when it is no longer able to contain or con-

fine its vain and impious Imaginations within itself, but labours to vent them by the Tongue, or diffuse them by the Press. This is a Sin like to that of the Scribes and Pharisees, *who compass'd Sea and Land to make Profelytes, that they might make them two-fold more the Children of Hell than themselves.*

Principles of Infidelity, while restrain'd within a Man's own Bosom, are injurious only to himself; but when they are divulged, *they likewise infect and poison other Men*, like the Pestilence that walketh in Darknes, and the Sicknes that destroyeth at Noon day: the Mischief, which before was particular, by taking air becomes universal.

A *Third* way of denying or being ashamed of Christ and his Words is by our Deeds, by refusing to imitate our Lord's Example, or to pay obedience to his Laws; 'tis our Actions that give the finishing Stroke to Sin, and fill up the Measure of Wickedness. Sin is first conceived in Thought, by lewd and profane Discourse it is nourished and strengthened, and by our Works it is perfectly compleated.

For Libertines to indulge themselves *in the Works of the Devil*, is natural to them, for *they are his Children*, and therefore *the Works of their Father they will do*. But it seems no less strange for those, who have been *baptized into the Name and Faith of Jesus*, to act contrary thereto, than it would be for a
good

good Tree to yeild bad Fruit, or a sweet Fountain to send forth bitter Streams; yet strange as it is, it is but too true in fact, that there are Legions of these Anti-Christes, who thus hold the sacred Truths in Unrighteousness.

There are those, *who pay Tithe of Mint, Anise, and Cummin; who neglect the weightier Matters of the Law, Judgment, Mercy, and Faith; who for a shew can make long and loud Prayers, and yet upon occasion will make no Scruple, to devour Widows Houses.* There are those, *who can make clean the outside of the Cup and Platter, and yet within are full of Extortion and Excess; who can boast of Sincerity, and yet be guilty of the grossest Hypocrisy; who can talk much of Meekness and Humility, while their Hearts are full of Pride and Revenge; who preach up Love and Union, yet delight in Hatred, and in sowing Discord amongst Brethren; who can profess Friendship, that like a Joab, or a Judas, they may betray and kill with a Kiss.*

Of these three Ways of denying Christ, the first, (*viz.*) the Denial of him and his Words in Thought; tho' it is a grievous Sin in his Sight, whose Prerogative it is *to try our Hearts and Reins*, yet it is not that sort of Denial which is here censured in my Text; because this is a Denial or being *ashamed of him and his Words before Men, in an adulterous Generation*; which being no otherwise to be express'd

press'd but by external Signs, such as are our Words or Actions, whereby other Men may know, as well as ourselves, that we have no Value or Esteem for our Lord; therefore the two other Kinds of denying or being ashamed of Christ, namely in Word, and in Deed, are only here expressly to be understood; and these also must have their proper Limitations: for 'tis not to profane the Name of Christ, or to disobey his Commands, out of a Principle of Atheism, Infidelity, or strong Inclination to a vicious Course of Life, tho' this is, or implies, a *Denial* or Renunciation of Christ and his Religion, which will render those, who are guilty of it, obnoxious to God's Wrath: but the Denial of him, here forbidden, is such as doth suppose a Man to know and believe in Christ, and the Truths which he hath revealed; but to be ashamed or afraid to confess or own either him or them in a *sinful Generation*, for Fear of suffering some Evil, or of being deprived of some Good, on account of such an Acknowledgment or Confession.

This is what is meant by being ashamed of Christ and his Words:

The Causes of which I proceed now in the *Second Place* to enquire into.

Now the first Cause of this Denial or being ashamed of Christ is temporal Gain. This

is the great Goddess Diana, which not only the Men of Ephesus, but all Nations and Languages under Heaven fall down before, and worship: 'tis this by which all the Springs of Nature are moved, and the World itself turn'd upside down: 'tis with this that the Devil, who well knew the Efficacy of the Temptation, thought to have turn'd the Son of God himself into an Idolater: and 'tis with this that the God of this World doth blind the Minds of them which believe not, lest the Light of the glorious Gospel of Christ, who is the Image of God, should shine unto them.

So strange a Power hath temporal Gain over the Minds of Men, that it continually changes their Opinions, their Looks, and Actions; and makes the clearest Truths, the very first Principles of Reason and Religion, (as well as Empires) subject to Revolution. 'Tis for this that the Hypocrite disfigures his Face, sounds a Trumpet before his Alms, and prays in the Synagogue, and in the Streets, that he may have Glory and Reward of Men. 'Twas for this, for the Loaves and Fishes, that the Multitude followed our Saviour; 'twas for this, for the thirty Pieces of Silver, that Judas did betray him; and for the self same Cause, Many, like the young Man in the Gospel, who had great Possessions to retain, or get the like, turn their Backs upon him, deny or are asham'd of him.

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That this is matter of Fact, Experience doth attest, and that it is both fallacious and dangerous to make worldly Interest the sole End of our Pursuits, our Lord himself in a Verse or two preceding my Text assures us; for saith He, *what shall it profit a Man, if he shall gain the whole World, and lose his own Soul? or what shall a Man give in exchange for his Soul?*

Another Cause of this Denial or being *ashamed of Christ and his Words*, is Fear of the Hatred and Contempt of the World. The Religion of Jesus is contrary to the natural Passions, and corrupt Inclinations of Mankind: 'tis pure, spiritual, heavenly, and therefore repugnant to the impure, carnal, and worldly Dispositions of Men, who, because they can neither relish its refined Pleasures, nor perceive the Reasons upon which it is founded and recommended to us, hate and despise it.

And because the Church of Christ, which professeth this Religion, *is founded upon a Rock; is a spiritual Building, of which Christ himself is the chief corner Stone*, and consequently stands unmoved, inspite of all the Batteries, which malicious Rage and Fury can make against it: The Devil and his Agents despairing to dispute Religion out of the World, and intirely to demolish the Church of Christ, endeavour to shame her out of it, and by bitter

ter Reproaches, and virulent Invectives, to discourage and terrify the Professors of it.

They falsely represent Religion, as a Composition of Pride and Hypocrisy, Singularity and Enthusiasm, as destructive of the Liberty, the Pleasures, and Happiness of Life; and brand all her Votaries with the odious Names of Puritanical and Precise, weak and superstitious, overcredulous or designing Men.

By this Artifice Multitudes are deceived and ruined; for Men having naturally a quick Sense of Honour, nothing is more ungrateful to, nothing makes a deeper Impression on them than Contempt; and therefore for fear of being hated and ridiculed by an *adulterous and sinful Generation*, they are but too easily induced to renounce their Christian Name and Covenant, and to plunge themselves into, and swim with the common Stream of Iniquity.

A third Cause of *Denying or being ashamed of Christ and his Words*, is fear of Trouble and Persecution for the sake of Christ and his Gospel through Weakness of Faith: I add through Weakness of Faith; because where Faith is strong, there can be no Fear; for true *Faith is made perfect by Love, and true Love casteth out Fear*, all base apostatizing Fear of *Persecution for Christ, or his Word's sake*: for through Faith every good Christian can triumph over *Tribulation or Distress, over*

Famine or Nakedness, over Peril or Sword, and be more than a Conqueror through Christ that loves him. By this, Moses chose rather to suffer Affliction with the People of God, than to enjoy the Pleasures of Sin for a Season; by this, the primitive Christians endured patiently and cheerfully the Trial of cruel Mockings and Scourgings, yea moreover of Bonds, Imprisonments and Death.

Nay, this spiritual Armour will make even the Coward Valiant, and without it the Heart of the Valiant will wax faint; 'twas Faith bore up St Peter upon the Waves of the Sea, but as that *wavered, he began to sink*; this made him follow our Saviour to the High Priest's Palace, and Want of this, inspite of all his Resolutions, made him *thrice deny him*.

Whenever therefore any Man is affraid or ashamed to confess himself a Disciple of Christ, and *to hold fast the form of sound Words* by him delivered, it is to be imputed to his natural Fears increased through Weakness or want of Faith.

But are all Persons at all Times, and in all Places, obliged to confess the Faith of Christ crucified, and publickly to assert the Truths of the Gospel? is fear of Persecution, and hope of worldly Gain, inconsistent with Christianity? may we not decline the one, and pursue the other, without the Imputation of being ashamed of Christ? may it not be
some-

sometimes Rashness and Folly, openly to profess ourselves Followers of Jesus, as well as at other times the most ungrateful Sin to deny or be ashamed of him?

To give an Answer to these Queries. We say, that in Times of Persecution, 'tis our Duty, as much as in us lies, to suppress and conquer our Fears, and for the Cause of Christ bravely to withstand and endure all the fiery Trials, the Malice of Men or Devils can exercise us with, if with a safe Conscience we cannot escape them: in this Case we should be so far from repining at our Sufferings, that *we should rejoyce, and be exceeding glad, that we are thought worthy to suffer for the Name of Christ, for great will be our Reward in Heaven.*

But if our Sufferings may be with a good Conscience avoided, we are not commanded by Reason or Religion to rush into them: we may innocently conceal ourselves, and our Principles; we may *be harmless as Doves, and yet as wise as Serpents: if Men persecute us in one City, our Saviour himself bids us flee unto another.* Nor perhaps was it ever objected by our Lord as a Crime to Nicodemus, that *for Fear of the Jews, he waited on him by Night.*

And as for the Objects of our Hopes and Desires, the Pleasures and Profits of this World, we must be very cautious, that they

prove not a deceitful Snare, and rob us of our Innocence: for these Temptations oftentimes prevail, where Violence is ineffectual: Sampson, whom the Philistines in vain attempted to destroy by Force, fell an easy Prey to them, thro' the endearing Caresses of a treacherous Delilah.

The Pleasures and Profits of this World we may lawfully pursue, and innocently enjoy; because they are given sometimes as the Blessings of Heaven, and may and ought to be used to the Improvement of our own Virtues, the Encrease of Piety, and the Honour of God.

But they prove a Curse to us, if we prostitute our Conscience and Religion to obtain them; or if honestly gain'd, we spend them not in Charity to our poor Brethren, but upon our Lusts and Passions, to the prejudice of publick Societies, or the Ruin of private Men; or, if to secure them, we deny or are ashamed of our Lord.

I proceed now *Thirdly* to consider some of the Effects of this vicious Shame, with respect to ourselves, or other Men.

With respect to ourselves this vicious Shame is just the Reverse of true Modesty; this is not only a Sign of a good Disposition, but a natural Preservative and Security against Sin; and hath such an Abhorrence against
every

every thing, that is indecent or impure, as will not suffer a Man to be guilty of it himself, nor see it committed or repeated by others without a Blush; and therefore wherever it is cherished, like the Grace of God, it will mightily conduce to prevent or restrain us from the Commission of Sin.

But vicious Shame, or false Modesty, corrupts the Judgment, betrays the Succours of Reason, and leaves us a Prey to every Temptation: they, who are possessed with it, dare neither speak nor act in Defence of Christ, or his Religion; instead of letting their *Light shine before Men*, that *God may be glorified*, they labour to conceal it, lest themselves should be vilified. In a word, it makes us ashamed of that which really is our greatest Honour, and do those things, of which alone we ought to be ashamed.

And if we consider it with respect to other Men, the Influence of it will be proportion'd to the Characters of the Persons who are guilty of it. In private Persons, it will be an Offence to Good, and an Encouragement to bad Men; it will grieve the Soul of the Righteous, and induce the proud and haughty Scornor to make a greater Mock of Religion, as well as Sin. And if it will have this Effect from the Behaviour of private Persons, how much more mischievous will it be, if Persons of Eminence and Authority should be

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corrupted by it? for the higher the Station, the more remarkable will be the Character; the more eminent the Person, the more poisonous will be the Example: because inferior Persons are apt to imagine, that Wisdom, Goodness, and Power are linkt together, and therefore for their Direction in their moral or religious Conduct, they love to say, have any of the Rulers, and Pharisees believed on Christ? and therefore, if these deny, or are ashamed of Christ, the common People will also disown that Prophet, which arose from Galilee.

Great Reason therefore have those who are Stewards of the Mysteries of the Gospel of Christ, whose peculiar Business it is to preach the Word of God, to feed his Sheep, his spiritual Flock, which He hath purchased with his own Blood, to be instant in Season, out of Season, to exhort, reprove, rebuke with all Authority: great Reason, I say, have these to take heed to themselves and to their Doctrine, lest, by perverting the Word, or by an unsuitable Conversation, they corrupt and offend their Hearers, and they themselves become Castaways.

The *Fourth* Particular to be considered is the Folly of this vicious Shame: for frequently it is founded upon a Mistake; for there is not always that Danger of being despised, hated,

hated, and persecuted, for *the sake of Christ and his Words*, as we may apprehend: for tho' we read, that *among the chief Rulers many believed on Christ, but did not confess him, because of the Pharisees, lest they should be put out of the Synagogues* *; yet God be praised, that is not our Case, for the Christian Religion is the Religion of our Country, it is established by our Laws, our Kings are its nursing Fathers, and our Queens its nursing Mothers, and 'tis the Glory of our British Monarchs to be Defenders of its Faith.

And what, tho' it be made, by some impious and profane Men, who have not so much Sense and Fear of a God as the very Devils, for *these believe and tremble*, the dayly Subject of their Derision and Reproach; yet even among these, *such is the Beauty of Holiness*, with which the Religion of Jesus, *the King's Daughter, who is all glorious within, and whose Clothing is of wrought Gold*, is arrayed, that she frequently commands Respect.

But suppose there was that real Danger, as some imagine, of losing the Praise of the World for the sake of Religion: shall the Praise of wicked Men, tho' never so numerous, induce us to deny, or be ashamed of it? shall not the Approbation of a good Conscience, the Esteem of all good Men, and the Praise and Love of God, much rather pre-

* John 12. 42.

vail with us to adhere to it, manfully to fight under Christ's Banner against all its spiritual Enemies, and to continue Christ's faithful Soldiers and Servants unto our Lives End? Can it be Wisdom to discard and renounce the noblest of all Professions, to gratify the Ignorance and Corruption of the worst of Men? Can it be Wisdom to be ashamed of and quit the Service of the best of Masters, which is perfect Freedom and whose Wages is eternal Life, to enslave ourselves under the Bondage of the worst of Tyrants, whose fairest Temptations are empty Poms and Vanities, and whose *Wages is Death* eternal?

But the Folly of this vicious Shame will most fully appear, if we consider in the

Last Place, the Nature of the Punishment denounced against those who are guilty of it. Whoever shall *be ashamed of Christ and his Words in this sinful Generation*, of him will the *Son of Man be ashamed*, when he cometh in the *Glory of his Father with the holy Angels*.

I shall here briefly consider the Action together with the Circumstances of it; *the Son of Man will be ashamed of him*; as St Matthew expresses it, *Christ will deny him*; or as St Luke renders it, *Christ will say to him, I know you not*; all which Phrases are of the like Import and Signification, each of them as proceeding from the Mouth of our Saviour,
when

when He shall come to judge the World at the last Day, denoting whatever may affect and strike the Sinner's Soul with the utmost Horror and Confusion, for each of them is a Sentence of Damnation: He that was a Miracle of Love and Mercy; He that came into the World to preach the perfect Will of God, that we *may be wise unto Salvation; to die for Sinners, that we might be reconciled to God; that rose again, that we might be justified; that ascended into Heaven, and sitteth at the right Hand of his Father, continually interceding for us;* will declare from his awful Tribunal, that He *is ashamed* of those, who here *were ashamed* of him. Then the Day of Pity and Compassion will be past, and strict and inflexible Justice will take place: what inexpressible Agonies will the Sinner then feel, when he shall hear his almighty Judge *deny him, or say unto him, I know you not?*

If a Look of Christ, when He *was deliver'd into the Hands of Sinners*, affected St Peter after he had *thrice denied him*, with such Shame and Remorse, that *he went out and wept bitterly*, how much more dreadful will his Appearance be to those who *were ashamed of him*, when they shall see the Son of Man *sitting on the right Hand of Power, and coming in the Clouds of Heaven?* when He shall come attended with all the Circumstances, that can make his Appearance look terrible and glo-

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rious? when he shall come in the Glory of his Father, and the holy Angels? Then in the Presence of Almighty God, before that August Assembly, shall his infamous and ungrateful Folly, who denied his Lord, be laid open and proclaim'd, with all the trifling and insignificant Motives, which did prompt him to it.

Then shall his sensual Pleasures, that softened him into sinful Compliances, and made him quit his Integrity; the Riches and Honours of this World, which enticed him to Idolatry; the transient Evils, such as Stripes, Bruises, and Death, which frighted him to deny his Lord, and renounce his Faith; shall be weighed in the Ballance of the Sanctuary, against the inexhaustible Rivers of Pleasure, which are at God's right Hand; against the Riches and Treasures of Heaven; against the exceeding Weight of eternal Glory, with which the Lord will reward his Saints; and the momentary Afflictions of this Life, against the Wrath of God, and almighty Vengeance, the full Vials of which will be poured out upon impenitent Sinners for ever: and then how wanting will be found, how lighter than Vanity itself will all the now admired Idols of Riches, Honours, and Pleasures of this World, appear, for the Sake of which they denied and were ashamed of our Lord, in comparison to the Blessings of Heaven, which they should

should have enjoyed, if they had persevered in their Christian Duty to the End?

And how little and contemptible will those Evils then be truly thought, for which they deserted and betray'd the Cause of Vertue, lost the Joys above, and plung'd themselves into the Gulph of endless Woe? Then shall the foolish Choice of Sinners add Poison to *the Sting of Death*, and encrease the Misery of their Damnation: then all their Hypocrisy shall be discovered, all their Disguises taken off, and all their Corruptions expos'd to view, before the numerous Army of Saints and Martyrs, before the Host of Heaven, the holy Angels; all these will be Witnesses of the Folly, Shame, and Confusion of Sinners, and of the Wrath of God, which will for ever abide upon them.

To conclude. I have laid before you, my Reverend Brethren, the Nature, Causes, Effects, Folly, and Punishment of the Sin condemned in my Text: what remains now, but that I should exhort some of you, as faithful *Stewards of the Mysteries of Christ*, to whom *are committed the Oracles of God*, strenuously to contend, against all antient and modern Opposers, for the Honour and Dignity of our Lord and Master, for the Truth of his holy Word, for the great Doctrines of Faith, and perfect Rules of a good Life, delivered unto us in the Gospel.

And to animate you thereto, Let me beseech you to consider the Certainty, Excellency, and Importance of the Truths of our Religion, and the Wisdom and Authority of its Author. Let me beseech you to consider, how we have, not only devoted ourselves at our baptismal Font to his Honour and Service, and frequently renew'd that Covenant at the Communion of his Body and Blood, but we have also, in a peculiar manner above all other Christians, dedicated ourselves as Servants to his Altar, as his Priests and Ministers of his Word; and are therefore bound to be pure and primitive in our Doctrine, exemplary in our Lives, zealous towards God, and Lovers of the temporal and spiritual Welfare of our Brethren; and therefore should use the utmost of our Endeavours to express the Sincerity of our Faith, and Zeal in our publick Discourses, in our private Admonitions, and in the whole Course of a moral and religious Conduct.

I need not observe to you, that all your Words and Actions are narrowly watched and scann'd; that your Frailties and Imperfections are for the most part highly aggravated and severely censured; and that even your most innocent Behaviour oftentimes much traduced and misrepresented: from whence we should learn not to be discouraged in our Christian Warfare, but to abstain not only

only from Evil, but from all the Appearance thereof.

Nay, we should hence learn to be so firmly attach'd to the Duties of our Religion, that none of the good Things of this Life should entice us to forsake, nor none of the evil Things of this Life deter us from pursuing them. No mercenary Hopes of Preferment then should induce us by Perjury or Simony to obtain it; nor base Regard of Men's Displeasure make us prostitute our Honour and Conscience, to gratify their Humours, for Fear of loosing it.

This Lesson we should learn even of wicked *Balaam*, not to go beyond the Commandment of the Lord in any Case whatsoever, tho' *impious Balaks* would give us their Houses full of Silver and Gold to bribe us to it: for how empty and insignificant are all the Pleasures, Profits, and Honours of this World? what a poor Temptation are they to be *asham'd of Christ and his Words*? especially when compared to the Joys and Glories of Heaven, the sure promised Rewards of our faithful Adhesion to our Master and his Cause; or to the Evils and Miseries of Hell, the sure Punishments denounced against those, who shall deny, or be *asham'd* of either.

Let us consider, that to be a Coward and a Christian, where the Honour of God and his Religion is concern'd, is a Contradiction.

I know, that there are great Difficulties in our Way, but 'tis our Duty to overcome them; for if God set forth the Apostles, as it were appointed unto Death; if He permitted them to hunger and to thirst, to be naked and buffeted, to have no certain dwelling Place; if they laboured, working with their Hands; if being reviled, they blessed; being persecuted, they suffered it; being defrauded, they entreated: no marvel that we their Successors should be made by some, as the Filth of the World, and as the Offscouring of all Things even unto this Day.

But to these Indignities let us oppose the Comfort of a good Conscience, and the exceeding Weight of Glory, which will infinitely overballance our momentary Afflictions.

Let us consider, that our Religion is a suffering Religion, and therefore suffering, because Christ the Captain of our Salvation was made perfect thro' Sufferings, and because, if we suffer with him, we shall also reign with him.

Finally, let us consider, that Christ himself hath told us, that *whosoever will come after him, must deny himself, and take up his Cross and follow him; that whosoever will save his Life, by refusing to lay it down for his Sake, shall lose it; but that whosoever shall lose his Life, for his and his Gospel's sake, shall save it.*

The Sin of rash Anger.

S E R M O N XIII.

E P H E S. IV. 26.

Be ye angry and sin not, let not the Sun go down upon your Wrath.

BE ye angry and sin not, this the Apostle seems to say by way of Concession, rather than of Command; (though there are some Cases, where it is expedient, and necessary, that we should testify our repentment) as if He had said, if the Case be such that ye must be angry, yet see it be without Sin: *let not the Sun go down upon your Wrath*, that is, if your Anger is excessive (which the word Wrath implies,) yet let it not be lasting, be reconciled before *the Sun go down, nor give place to the Devil*; which he certainly doth, who gives a loose to excessive

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cessive Anger, for he lays himself open to the Devil, to be tempted by him to the commission of the most monstrous Villanies.

In discoursing on the Words of my Text; I shall endeavour to shew,

First, that we may be angry without Sin, *be ye angry, and sin not.*

Secondly, how, and when, this Passion of Anger becomes sinful to us, together with the heinous Guilt and Folly thereof.

Lastly, lay down some Rules, which may be useful to prevent, or restrain this Passion of Anger, from hurrying us into the Commission of Sin.

First then I am to shew, that we may be angry without Sin; *be ye angry and sin not.* There was a Sect of Philosophers, who thro' Pride and Conceit, prescribed and pretended to live up to such exalted Rules of Morality, which no one ever did, or will be able to observe; for they would have their Wise-man, not only to be govern'd by Reason, but to be entirely free from all Passions whatsoever; because, in their Opinion, the Passions were no better than impure Diseases of a distempered Soul; and therefore to be condemn'd and rejected as criminal in themselves, and beneath the Dignity of human Nature.

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Now, had their Opinion regarded only those turbulent Motions of the Appetite, which break through the Boundaries of Reason, and hurry the Soul into all the Enormities of Sin, it would deserve our Approbation, and Esteem; because founded on Truth, and consistent with the Principles of Reason and Religion: but to require of Man wholly to extirpate his Passions, is unreasonable, impracticable, and unnatural: it is unreasonable, because human Passions are the proper Objects of human Vertues; for what is Vertue, but an Habit of the Mind, which keeps the Passions in Subjection and Obedience, suffering them neither to exceed, or fall short of those Bounds which Prudence doth prescribe?

What is Fortitude, but a Guard to the Mind, against Fool-hardiness and unmanly Fears? what is Meekness, but a Vertue which preserves us from being insensible of Injuries and Indignities offered us, on the one hand; and from too fierce, bitter, and cruel Resentments on the other? and the like Proportion between two sinful Extreams, or extravagant Passions, is observed by all the other particular Vertues: wherefore to extirpate the Passions, is to remove the proper Objects of Vertue, and consequently to destroy the very Nature of Vertue.

Nay, were we ever so desirous to extir-

pate our Passions, we should find all our Attempts for that purpose to be but vain : For where is that Person to be found, who is so entirely rational, as to be void of all Passion? if any such there be, we may presume to say, that he must be more than Man, or less than a Brute : for Brutes are sensible of Pleasure and Pain, of Joy and Grief, of Love and Indignation; and even the holy Angels, those spiritual and intelligent Beings, are endued with Passions in like manner as the Souls of Men are ; for *they rejoyce at the Conversion of a Sinner*, and doubtless bewail the Fall of the Righteous: God alone is that pure, intellectual, and most perfect Being, to which no Passions can be ascribed ; because his Nature is simple and uncompounded, infinitely removed from all Imperfections, some Degree of which the Passions do necessarily imply : so that unless we can suppose a Man to be an insensible Being, beneath the Beasts that perish, or translated into a God, it must needs be impracticable for him, to divest himself of the common Sentiments of Humanity.

But further, since the great and holy Author of Nature, when He *formed Man out of the Dust, and breathed into him a living Soul*, planted within him a sensitive Appetite, whence all his Passions arise, as well as a rational Faculty to direct, and guide their Motions, we may conclude, that they may be-
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come good or evil, according to the Object, about which they are employed, or the End which they pursue, so that in themselves they are neither good nor evil: because good, as well as bad Men, hope and fear, rejoyce and grieve alike; but with this Difference, that the Passions in the one are changed into Vertues, whereas the Passions in the other are converted into Sins: 'tis owing therefore to our Nature, that our Passions cannot be rooted out, and 'tis the Business of our Vertue to check their Extravagancies, and keep them in Regularity and Order.

The Notion therefore of the Stoick's concerning the Passions is groundless, and their boasted Extirpation of them ridiculous and unnatural: if therefore the Passions in general are of an indifferent Nature in themselves, neither good nor evil; but become either one or the other, according as they are well or ill applied with respect to their Object and End: it follows, that Anger, which is one of the Passions, is in itself neither good nor evil, but is diversified according to the Object and End thereto proposed.

For if we are angry to see Religion prevail, and Impiety decay; if we ungratefully resent the wholesom Advice, and kind Admonitions of a Friend; if, as the Apostle saith, we *become Enemies* to other Men, because they are so good and just, *as to tell us*

the Truth, and rebuke us for our darling Faults; our Anger then becomes highly criminal, and is a great Aggravation of our Guilt.

Whereas on the other hand, if with holy David, our Indignation doth arise to see *the Floods of Ungodliness abound, and the wicked flourish like a green Bay-tree, and do even what they lust*; if, thro' concern for God's Glory, and the Preservation of his Church, we say with him, *wilt thou not slay the wicked, O God? depart from us, ye blood-thirsty Men, for they speak unrighteously against thee, and take thy Name in vain*: nay, if thro' a pious Transport of holy Zeal, we should say with that Prophet, *do not we hate them, O Lord, that hate thee? and are we not grieved with those, that rise up against thee? yea, we hate them right sore, as tho' they were our Enemies*. If our Anger be thus far inflamed, the great Provocation there-to might at least palliate, if not excuse the Warmth of our Resentments, and the Sharpness of our Expressions: however, if our Zeal will not justify our hatred of those who are avowed Enemies to God; I am sure it will justify our hatred of their Enmity, and our Aversion to their Sins, against which we cannot be too warm, nor too severe in our Re-proofs: for our zealous Indignation against Sin is no more than Duty, because it is an Imitation of his holy Zeal, who knew no Sin,
and

and yet boldly rebuked, and died for Sin, that penitent Sinners might be saved.

Our Anger, I say, on such Occasions, is our Duty, because, in so doing, we imitate our Lord's Example: for He knowing the Pride, Covetousness, and Hypocrisy of the Scribes and Pharisees, severely rebuked their abominable Practices; and by the many repeated Woes He denounced against them, we see how much that *Generation of Vipers had provoked his righteous Soul: and when He saw those that sold Oxen, Sheep, and Doves, in the Temple of Jerusalem, He scourged both them, and their Beasts out of that sacred Place, overthrew the Money Changers Tables, and the Seats of them that sold Doves; and said unto them, it is written, my House shall be called the House of Prayer, but ye have made it a Den of Thieves; verifying thereby that Prophecy of David concerning him, the Zeal of thine House hath eaten me up.*

And when the Ruler of the Synagogue reviled him for healing a Woman, *who had a Spirit of Infirmity for many Years, He warmly replied, thou Hypocrite, doth not each one of you, on the Sabbath, loose his Ox, or his Ass from the Stall, and lead him away to watering? and ought not this Woman, being a Daughter of Abraham, whom Satan had bound, lo! these eighteen Years, be loosed from this Bond on the Sabbath Day?*

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From these Passages of Scripture we find, that our blessed Saviour himself, *the Author and Prince of Peace*, was on such high Provocations excited to Anger, and moved to shew his great Displeasure; and yet we are assur'd from the same *infallible Oracles of Truth*, that He was free *from Sin*; and consequently Anger in itself is not sinful, (which the Words of my Text imply, *be ye angry, and sin not*) but sometimes, and on some Occasions, necessary to be exerted, because it is our Duty to tread in our great Master's Steps.

Having shewn, that Anger in itself is not sinful, I proceed according to my

Second Particular, to shew, when it becomes sinful to us, together with the heinous Guilt and Folly thereof.

It becomes sinful to us, when it is raised without just Cause, and will admit of no Restraints of Reason: Causeless Anger is, when we give ourselves up to it, fretting and tormenting ourselves and others, upon every slight or without any real Provocation, working ourselves up, through groundless Suspicions, and overhasty and false Conclusions, to all the Extravagancies of Rage and Folly. Thus some passionate Men take that as an Injury, which was intended for their Good, and fiercely resent the Effects of Duty and Love, as an unpardonable Affront, and fly
out

out into reproachful Words, and revengeful Acts; when there is nothing beside their own vain Jealousies to provoke them to it; like Clouds that break out in Thunder and Lightning, when all the Sulphur and Fire is bread in their own Bowels.

The Prophet Jonah is a remarkable Instance of a Person overruled and carried away by this inordinate Passion: He prophesied that Ninevey should be destroy'd; the People repented, and God was pleased to spare them; but Jonah was angry, because God was appeas'd; and knew not how to forgive that Mercy, which readily forgave the repenting Ninevites: and when God had caused a Worm to destroy that Gourd, which he had prepared to shade his hot and angry Head, he fell into another outrageous Fit, for the Loss of so mean a Trifle; and tho' God did meekly expostulate with him, *doſt thou well to be angry for the Gourd?* through Violence of Passion, he insolently replies even to the great God of Heaven, *yea, I do well to be angry, even unto Death.*

And as Anger becomes sinful when it is without Cause, so likewise is it sinful when it is immoderate and without Bounds: which it may exceed, either in Degree, or Duration; in Degree, when by its Vehemence, tho' a just Cause of Resentment be given, it transports us beyond all the Restraints of Reason,

Reason, and Religion; when it hurries us on blindly to retaliate evil with evil, in Words or Deeds, not regarding the Nature or Demerit of the Offence given, nor observing any Proportion in our Resentments.

But we must not think because private Revenge, the Result of Anger, is a Transgression of the divine Law, that therefore it is a Crime in a Magistrate, to inflict due Punishment on those who deserve it: for to him *is committed the Sword of Justice*, and 'tis his Glory, as well as Duty, *not to bear that Sword in vain.*

And as Anger is sinful, when it exceeds in Degree, so also it is when it exceeds in Duration: for if *we let the Sun go down upon our Wrath*, if we lie down upon our Beds with Anger boiling within our Breasts, we shall find it soured into Malice and Hatred in the Morning: and what Evils will not Malice and Hatred produce? they will corrupt and poison all the Seeds of Vertue and Piety, and drive God's Holy Spirit from us; for how can that Dove-like Spirit reside in a Heart, that is full of Gall and Bitterness? or how can the Fire of divine Love burn clear and bright, where there are continual Fumes of Anger rising up to obscure, or extinguish it?

How opposite is Wrath and Clamour, with all their direful Effects, to the holy Doctrines of Jesus, which inculcate nothing with more Earnest-

Earnestness, than Peace and Love, Meekness and good Will towards all Mankind? what Injustice and Cruelty do usually attend the fiery Sallies of this Passion? with how false a Balance doth he that is actuated, or rather possess'd therewith, weigh the Actions and Qualities of other Men? To his Heart prejudiced by Passion, a Mole-hill becomes a Mountain; and the least Indignity, in his Opinion, deserves the keenest Animadversion, and demands the most bloody Revenge, being never to be forgotten, or forgiven: thus nothing would satisfy the Rage and Insolence of Haman, whom Mordecai, through the Omission of a little Ceremony, had provoked, under a Gallows of fifty Cubits high prepared for the Offender, nor even that make him an amends, without shedding the Blood of a whole Nation, of all the People of Mordecai. But it is observable, that the same Gallows, which Haman had erected for Mordecai, was by divine Providence the Instrument of his own Execution.

'Tis no wonder therefore, that this headstrong Passion, which naturally tends to, and is productive of Murder, should by our Saviour be reduced under the Sin of Murder; for saith He *, *ye have heard, that it hath been said by them of old Time, Thou shalt not kill: and whosoever shall kill, shall be in danger of*

* Matth. 5. 21, 22.

the Judgment: but I say unto you, that whosoever is angry with his Brother without a Cause, shall be in danger of the Judgment; and whosoever shall say to his Brother, Racha, shall be in danger of the Council; but whosoever shall say, thou Fool, shall be in danger of Hell-fire.

If then we would avoid the horrid Guilt, and Shame, with all the dreadful Consequences of this unruly Passion, we must check and stifle the first Motions thereto; for if the Fire be once kindled, 'tis easily blown up, but hardly to be extinguish'd; for *he who is hasty of Spirit, saith the Wise-man, exalteth Folly, and a wrathful Man stirreth up Strife.* And we may be further convinced of the heinous Guilt, and monstrous Folly of excessive Anger, which, as Solomon observes, *resteth only in the Bosom of Fools*, forasmuch as it not only renders us odious and ridiculous to Man, but also abominable in the Sight of God, because it makes even our Prayers, and other Acts of Devotion, unacceptable to him, and instead of procuring a Blessing, makes them prove a Curse to us: for thus saith our Saviour, *if thou bring thy Gift to the Altar, and there remembrest that thy Brother hath ought against thee; leave there thy Gift before the Altar, and go thy way, first be reconciled to thy Brother, and then come and offer thy Gift.*

And in the Prayer which He himself taught us, he bids us pray *to our Father which is in Heaven,*

Heaven, to forgive us our Trespases, as we forgive them which trespass against us. Can he then hope for Forgiveness, who will not forgive? can he dare to say to God, *forgive me my Trespases, as I forgive them that trespass against me?* for if he will not forgive, doth he not as oft as he repeats the Lord's Prayer, ask of God, instead of pardoning his Sins, to condemn him for them?

I proceed now, in the *Last* Place, to lay down some Rules, which may be useful to prevent or restrain this Passion of Anger from hurrying us into the Commission of Sin.

And *first*, because we are *not sufficient of ourselves to do any thing, our Sufficiency being of God*, we must pray, that He would renew a *right Spirit within us*, a meek and humble Spirit, for that is the *true Ornament*, which, as St Peter saith, *is in the Sight of God of great Price*; and we may add likewise in the Sight of Men: for he that is of a meek and humble Spirit, usually meets with that good Will and Esteem, which he is always ready to pay to others; and if he should meet with hatred for his good Will, he will not *behave himself unseemly, for he is not easily provoked*; but is more apt to *blesse than to curse even his Enemies, and pray for, than injure, those, who despitefully use him.*

Whereas he who is of a contrary Disposition,

sition, is apt to despise and affront others, and therefore to be despised and affronted himself: hence arise *Wrath and Clamour, Confusion, and every evil Work*. If then we would have our own Lives, or those of others, easy and happy, we must endeavour to walk *worthy of the Vocation wherewith we are call'd, in all Lowliness and Meekness, with Long-suffering; forbearing one another in Love, keeping the unity of the Spirit in the bond of Peace*.

Secondly, if we would restrain and suppress inordinate Anger, let us not suffer it to break forth in Words or Actions, 'till we have thoroughly weighed the Provocation thereto: *if thou hast heard a Word, saith the Son of Sirach, let it die with thee; be bold, it will not burst thee: admonish a Friend, it may be, he hath not done it; and if he hath done it, that he do so no more: admonish a Friend, it may be, he hath not said it; and if he hath, that he speak it not again: admonish a Friend, for many times it is a Slander, and believe not every Tale: for the inquisitive and credulous lay themselves open to the poisonous Darts of every evil Tongue*.

But if we suppress our Anger, 'till we have fully considered, whether we have just Cause for Resentment or not, we should probably be secured from its usual Guilt and Folly.

If there be no just Cause, our inflamed Hearts will soon grow cool, and joyful too,
that

that we have not rashly done those things, we should be ashamed and must repent of: and if there should be just Cause given, by suppressing a while the Motions of Anger, our Reason will recover itself, and direct us how to behave, as becometh wise Men and Christians.

Another most powerful Means and Motive to suppress this furious Passion, is the Consideration of *the long Suffering and Forbearance of God towards us Sinners*; for tho' He is the great *King of Kings, and Lord of Lords*, and we but *sinful Dust and Ashes*, yet *He waits long to be gracious, and thinks on Mercy, and is more ready to pardon and forgive us, than we are to offend him.*

Shall then the adorable Majesty of Heaven patiently bear with us ungrateful Sinners? and shall we not patiently bear with our fellow Servants, if they offend us? Shall *God forgive us an hundred Talents?* and shall we *take our insolvent Brethren by the Throat, if they owe us no more than an hundred Pence?* Were we, *while Enemies, reconciled to God by the Death of his Son?* and shall we, instead of being reconciled to those, who perhaps never really offended us, *let the Sun go down upon our Wrath, and never forgive them?*

Such Behaviour surely is unworthy of a Christian; quite the Reverse of our Saviour's Reasoning, *God, saith He, is kind unto the unthankful,*

thankful, and to the evil; be ye therefore merciful, as your Father is merciful.

To conclude; Let us consider, how much more noble it is to subdue, than to yeild to this, or any other inordinate Passion; to despise and forgive, rather than resent, an Injury? how much more generous it is to pity and pray for, rather than revile and avenge ourselves on, him that did it?

Let us consider the Deformity of this turbulent Passion, how it divests a Man of his Reason, and converts him into a wild Beast: let us consider, what Confusion of Spirits; what Change of Countenance; what Transports of Madness; what impious and profane Expressions against Heaven and Earth, against God and Man; what Violations of Friendship; what cruel Purposes; what bloody and barbarous Actions, a short Fit of it, sometimes all on a sudden precipitates Men into, which perhaps can never be repaired by any after Compensation, nor wash'd away by the Tears of Repentance.

I say, let us timely consider these Things, and we shall think it our Wisdom and Duty to confine this Passion within its proper Bounds; and to praise God for his Mercy, if He should, at any time, assist and enable us to suppress and conquer its Fury, by his preventing and restraining Grace.

On St Thomas.

S E R M O N X I V .

JOHN XX. 27, 28.

Then saith He to Thomas, reach hither thy Finger, and behold my Hands, and reach hither thy Hand, and thrust it into my Side; and be not faithless, but believing. And Thomas answer'd, and said unto him, my Lord, and my God.

IN this Chapter we are informed, that our blessed Lord appeared three several Times to his Disciples, after his Resurrection from the Grave, first to *Mary Magdalen*, whom, to satisfy her diligent Enquiry, he graciously saluted by the Name of *Mary*, saying, *touch me not, for I am not yet*

yet ascended to my Father; but go to my Brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father, and to my God, and your God. And the same Day at Evening, when the Brethren, his Disciples, were assembled together, came Jesus, and stood in the midst, saying unto them, Peace be unto you, and whosoever Sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whosoever Sins ye retain, they are retained; and this Blessing, and gracious Privilege He sealed unto them by breathing on them, and saying, receive ye the Holy Ghost, who being the Comforter, inspired them with such Consolation, as made them glad to communicate the joyful News of our Lord's Resurrection to Thomas, who was not with them when Jesus came; but their Words seemed to him as idle Tales, and he believed them not; for he said unto them, except I shall see in his Hands the Print of the Nails, and put my Finger into the Print of the Nails, and thrust my Hand into his Side, I will not believe.

And yet such was our Saviour's Love to this unbelieving, but chosen Disciple to preach his Word, and bear testimony to his Resurrection, that He appeared again soon after to his Disciples, as they were assembled together with Thomas with them, as it were on purpose to satisfy his Doubts and Scruples, and remove his Infidelity, saying unto him in particular, reach hither thy Finger, and behold

hold my Hands; and reach hither thy Hand, and thrust it into my Side; and be not faithless, but believing: and Thomas answered, and said unto him, my Lord, and my God.

In discoursing on these Words, I shall endeavour,

First, to shew the Weakness and Sinfulness of St Thomas's Incredulity.

Secondly, the rich Mercies and Goodness of our Lord shewn in his tender Reproof and gracious Conviction of this incredulous Apostle.

Thirdly, the good Effect of this Reproof and Conviction had upon St Thomas, expressed in these Words, *my Lord, and my God.* And,

Lastly, make some useful Reflections drawn from the foremention'd Particulars.

First, I am to shew the Weakness and Sinfulness of St Thomas's Incredulity.

That our Lord's Resurrection should have been thought a thing incredible by Jews and Gentiles, before their Conversion to the Faith of Christ, or that this great Article of the Resurrection should cause the weak Faith of Babes and Novices in Christianity to shake and stagger, is not so strange and surprizing, since among the learned Philosophers of Athens, those *wise Disputers of this World*,

when they heard St Paul *preaching* unto them *Jesus, and the Resurrection*, some of them in derision said, *what will this Babler say?* and others, *that he seem'd to be a Setter forth of strange Gods.*

For the Resurrection was an Act indeed before unheard of by them, and above the Power of their Heathen Deities to effect: an Act therefore, not only beyond their Comprehension, but also contrary to all their Rules of Philosophy, and Observations and Discoveries of Reason; and consequently, that these should doubt of, deny, and make a Mock of the Resurrection, is no wonder, because (as St Paul saith) *the natural Man discerneth not the Things that be of God, for they are spiritually discerned.*

But that an Apostle, a Disciple of our Lord, a Companion in his Labours, a Minister of his Word, an Interpreter of his Mysteries, a Witness of his Actions, a Spectator of his Miracles, who had seen our Saviour *make the Deaf to hear, the Dumb to speak, the Lame to walk; who had seen Storms and Tempests, Winds and Seas obedient to his Voice, the Devils, tho' a Legion, dispossess, and the Dead to rise again and live:* That such an one who had been, not only an Eye-witness of these his mighty Works, but also had doubtless wrought such mighty Works himself in his Name; that he should disbelieve, that Christ
was

was risen from the Dead, tho' after his Death and Burial He had appeared to the rest of the Apostles, who told him, that *they had seen the Lord*; and yet that he should have so little regard to their Words, as that he resolved, *except he should see in his Hands the Print of the Nails, and put his Finger into the Print of the Nails, and thrust his Hand into his Side, he would not believe*; this is what is strange, and perhaps would have been incredible, if St Thomas had not been an undeniable Instance of its Truth.

But this is no less an Argument of his own Weakness, and the Unreasonableness of his Incredulity: for why should he not have given credit to the united Testimony of all the rest of the Apostles, which, without his Testimony had been sufficient to have convinced all Christians in succeeding Ages of the Truth of our Lord's Resurrection? Did they not, whose Honesty and Integrity he had no Reason to question, assure him, that *they had seen the Lord*? could he reasonably suspect them to have been deceived, who had, not only seen him with their Eyes, but also heard him with their Ears twice pronounce his Benediction of *Peace upon them*, and authorize them *to remit and retain Sins*?

Could he suppose them, who were Teachers of Truth, and Servants of the God of Truth, to have been guilty of forging a Lie, and im-

posing it upon him? and therefore his obstinate Incredulity was in Effect, not only giving a Lie to the Testimony of his Brethren; and so far weakning thereby their powerful Evidence for the grand Article of his Master's Religion, his Resurrection from the Dead, without which *our Faith is vain, and our Preaching vain; for if Christ be not risen, we are yet in our Sins;* but it was also basely wounding his Lord and Master in that Point, which could most sensibly affect him: for since He was declared to be the Son of God with Power, * according to the Spirit of Holiness, by the Resurrection from the Dead: What could more effectually overturn this fundamental Proof of his Divinity, than the Denial of, or perverse Disbelief of his Resurrection?

For in the forecited Text, St Paul proves our Saviour to be essentially God from his † Power, his Holiness, and his Resurrection: his Almighty Power having been manifested by the Miracles he wrought, and the absolute Manner in which He did them; for thus saith He to the Leper, when He cured him, *I will be thou clean, and straitway he was cleansed:* his consummate Holiness being shewn by the Vertues which He taught and practised, for He was holy as God is holy; and his Glory and Majesty by his Resurrection, only with this

* Rom. i. 4. † Esprit Fletcher Eveque de Nimes Paneg. p. 357.

Difference, that his Power and Holiness were in some measure concealed under the Veil of our Weakness, and clouded with our Infirmities; whereas his Divinity was clearly manifested in his Resurrection.

For no other Being but that which is Omnipotent can raise the Dead, and therefore since the holy Scriptures assure us, that Christ was raised, not only by the Power of the Father, but also by his own; for thus saith our Lord to the Jews, *destroy this Temple, and in three Days I will raise it up*; which Words they ignorantly understood of the Temple of Jerusalem, but He spake of the Temple of his Body, which He very probably stiled so, because the Fullness of the Godhead dwelt in him bodily; and when He was risen from the Dead, his Disciples remembred; that He had said this unto them, and they believed the Scripture, and the Word that Jesus had said.

And therefore, I say, since upon the Resurrection of Christ the Apostles believed those Words of Christ, *destroy this Temple, and I will raise it up*, they consequently did believe, that Christ raised himself, and therefore did, as it is our Duty to do, believe his Divinity.

Wherefore it must be, not only a great Weakness in St Thomas to disbelieve the rest of the Disciples, who told him that they had seen the Lord, but also a grievous Sin in him,
to

to disbelieve those Words of Christ, *destroy this Temple, and in three days I will raise it up,* which He probably had heard, as well as the rest of the Disciples, and remembered too, and could not but believe the Scripture as well as they.

And what is yet a further Aggravation of the Sin of his Incredulity, he saith, he will not believe, unless he hath, not only an ocular Demonstration, but the Evidence of another Sense, to convince him of the Truth of our Lord's Resurrection. What Presumption was this in him to expect so great a Favour? what Reason could such an obstinate Unbeliever have to think, that our Lord would condescend to appear to him in particular, to satisfy his insolent Demands?

But perhaps his Incredulity was a judicial Effect, and punishment of his Absence from the religious Assembly of his Brethren on the Day of our Lord's Resurrection; for had he assembled himself with them, as he ought to have done, he also had seen our Lord, and been convinced of the Truth of his Resurrection, as well as they; and therefore, whoever wilfully *forsakes the Assembling himself together* with his Brethren in the House of God, where he delights to meet them, may be daily more and more hardened in Unbelief, and never be admitted, (tho' he seek it afterwards carefully with Tears, because there

is a Time when God will be gracious, and a Time when He will shut up his loving Kindness in Displeasure) to taste the good Word of God, and the Powers of the World to come, and may entirely lose that Sincerity of Heart, and Simplicity of Faith, without which it is impossible to please God, and consequently impossible to be saved; and be given up to a reprobate Sense, suffered to cavil and mock at, instead of believing, the holy Mysteries of our Religion; and, like our Apostle, demand such sensible Demonstrations of those sublime and spiritual Truths, which God in his infinite Wisdom will not, nor the Nature of many of those Truths revealed, nor our Capacities admit of.

St Thomas's obstinate Incredulity, except he could see in our Saviour's Hands the Print of the Nails, and put his Finger into the Print of the Nails, and thrust his Hand into his Side, somewhat resembles that of the Jews and chief Priests, who reviling our Lord in his dying Agonies, while hanging on the Cross, said, ah! Thou that destroyest the Temple, and buildest it in three Days, save thyself; if Thou be the Son of God, come down from the Cross; and He saved others, himself He cannot save; if He be the King of Israel, let him come down from the Cross, and we will believe him.

Nor much unlike these are some Christians, who pretend, that the Mysteries of
Chri-

Christianity are dark and obscure, and therefore want Miracles to move and quicken their Faith, and stir them up to the practice of Christian Vertues, saying, if they could but see the Heavens open'd, and one of those blessed Spirits, whom God sends to execute his Orders for the Welfare of those, who shall be Heirs of Salvation, come down from the Regions of Bliss; How would their Hope and Faith be strengthened and enliven'd! could they but see a marvellous Light shine in the Sanctuary, and Jesus Christ appear encircled with Rays of Glory, with what Reverence should they *worship and fall down before the Lord their Saviour!* little considering what Christ himself hath told us at the Close of *the Parable of Dives and Lazarus, if they hear not Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be perswaded, tho' one rose from the Dead.*

For if neither the Light and Authority of the Scriptures, the Succours of Grace, nor the Conviction of Conscience, can prevail to convert and reclaim a Sinner; neither would the Resurrection of a Person from the Dead be effectual for that Purpose; for tho' such an Apparition might for a while terrify the Sinner into good Resolutions, yet the Impression upon his Mind would soon grow languid, and be effaced, 'till being at length resolved into the Fumes of Melancholy or Delusions of Fancy, all his good Intentions and

Reso-

Resolutions would give way to the usual and impetuous Tide of his sinful Passions.

Nor are those free from the Charge of Infidelity, who boldly set up their Idol Reason in opposition to Revelation, being resolved to believe nothing, but what they can account for, and fully comprehend, not considering, as St Paul expresses it, *that the Foolishness of God is wiser than Men; and the Weakness of God is stronger than Men. But vain Man, as Job saith, would be wise, tho' he is born like a wild Ass's Colt.*

Reason indeed hath its proper Office and Province in the Arts and Sciences, and all the Affairs of this Life, but then it is finite, and consequently hath its proper bounds; *hitherto may she go, but no further:* the Mysteries of Religion are *deep things of God*, such therefore as are above her Reach, and not to be examined by her; for can Reason of herself by searching find out God? *can she find out the Almighty to perfection? it is as high as Heaven, what can she do? deeper than Hell, what can she know?* Let Reason then in the deep things of God, his mysterious Truths, submit to Faith; and what is expressly revealed in God's Word, tho' far passing her Understanding, let her assent to, and adore in humble Silence.

But to return to St Thomas, tho' his Unbelief was highly criminal, as St Peter's thrice

Denial of his Lord was; yet as our Saviour, with an eye of Pity and Compassion, lookt St Peter into Repentance, and made him go out, and weep bitterly for his Sin; so was He graciously pleased to consider St Thomas as an Instance of human Frailty, and for his Conviction condescended to give him that sensible Proof of his Resurrection which he required, *saying, reach hither thy Finger, and behold my Hands; and reach hither thy Hand, and thrust it into my Side, and be not faithless, but believing.*

Which brings me *Secondly* to consider the rich Mercies and Goodness of Christ shewn in his tender Reproof, and gracious Conviction of this incredulous Apostle.

The rich Mercies and Goodness of Christ are over all his Works, but especially over Man, whom He formed after his own Image; and when Man had defaced it by Sin, and become obnoxious to the divine Wrath, *in the Fulness of Time, He assumed our Flesh, and came and dwelt among us full of Grace and Truth: and after having patiently suffered all the Contradiction of Sinners, for the many gracious Words and Works He had said and done among them; He died the ignominious Death of the Cross for our Sins, and rose again for our Justification; rose again from the Grave by his own Power, that we may be absolved from our*

Transf.

Transgressions by the glorious Victory He gain'd over Sin, Death, and Satan, and be intitled to that eternal Redemption which He thereby purchas'd for us.

And to prove that He still retains for Man the same ineffable *Love, stronger than Death*, He daily convinces us, by the Motions of our own Consciences, and the sweet Influences of his Spirit, and that unless we first leave and forsake him, He will never *leave, nor forsake us*: this ardent Love for Man, tho' a Sinner, He express'd even while He was suffering Death for Sinners, *Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do*; and soon after his Resurrection, He shew'd it in his merciful and gracious Dealings with the unbelieving Apostle St Thomas. Tho' he was obstinate in Infidelity, yet Christ is abundant in Mercy: our Lord forsakes him not in his Weakness, rejects him not for his Unbelief; but seeks for him with care: and tho' on the Day of his Resurrection He shew'd himself only to the rest of the Apostles, that St Thomas, who was absent, might be convinced of the Truth of it by their Testimony: yet because that was not sufficient to make him a Believer, our Lord soon after appeared to St Thomas himself, and condescended to gratify his rude Demands, that in his own way he might be convinced of the Reality of his Resurrection.

And when He appeared before him, He has such a tender Regard to the Reputation of this unbelieving Offender, that He reproves him in the Place, where his Disciples were met together, while *the Doors were shut*; reproves him in their Presence, because his Crime was only known to them, and that not with a long and tedious Harangue, not with outrageous Complaints, bitter Words, and sharp Invectives, upon his weak and sinful Incredulity; but reproves him in the most friendly manner, in words most mild and moving, *be not faithless, but believing.*

A just Admonition this to all those, who are Preachers of his Word, Shepherds of Souls, and have any Authority in his Church, that it is their Duty to use gentle Methods, not reproachful Words, to act as becometh *Sons of Consolation, not Sons of Thunder*, in their Reproof and Correction of Sinners: so to behave as to shew, that 'tis not their Desire to insult, but to reclaim and reform the Sinner; to convince him of the extreme Folly and Danger of Sin, if persisted in; but if he repents, kindly *to receive him, and with the Oil of Gladness* to refresh and heal those painful Wounds, which Sin, that is the poisonous *sting of Death*, had made in his Conscience; and never to use Severity, denouncing Hell and Damnation, unless the Sinner be obstinate and resolved to die, as he hath lived, in his Sins.

Let

Let those indiscreet Pastors, who, govern'd more by Passion than Prudence, and inflam'd by a blind Zeal, not led by the Light of Scripture, treat Sinners with Scorn and Contempt, aggrandizing their Faults, and rashly, rudely, and publickly exposing thereby their Persons, as well as their Sins, then consider, that instead of mollifying, they do but harden Sinner's Hearts; and expose both themselves and their Office for their want of Charity and Justice, and deserve themselves that insolent Correction, with which they treat their Brethren.

How widely different from this Behaviour was that of our Lord's towards unbelieving Thomas, he meekly and humbly complies with his rude Demands? He shews him his Wounds, and opens to him the bowels of his Mercy and Compassion; shews him his *Hands and his Feet, and the Print of the Nails, and bids him thrust his Hand into his Side*, that Fountain of Love and Salvation, that *by seeing with his Eyes, and by touching and handling with his Hands that Word of Life*, he might be no longer *faithless, but believing.*

Let me apply therefore to all who are intrusted with the Care of Souls, who are *call'd to the Ministry, as was Aaron*, what our Saviour said to recommend the Practice of Charity from the Example of the good Samaritane, *Go, and do thou likewise*; I say, let me apply

apply the same Words to them, if they would act suitably to their Office and Character, in Cases of Reproof and Correction, which also are Works of Charity, that they may be excited so to behave as the meek and humble Jesus did, *Go thou, and do likewise*; for that is the true Way to make their Reproofs effectual, and all their *Labours in the Lord* to be successful.

Which reminds me of my *Third Particular*, which is to shew, what good Effect our Lord's gentle Reproof had, implied in these Words of St Thomas upon his Conviction, *my Lord, and my God.*

As from the Wound which the Soldier's Spear had made in our Saviour's Side, there issued out Blood and Water, the inestimable Price of our Redemption, and lively Emblems of the two Sacraments, Baptism and the Lord's Supper; so from the same Fountain arose that stedfast Faith, ardent Love, and holy Zeal, which shone conspicuous in the consequent Life and Actions of St Thomas, who, when he had *seen with his Eyes, and handled with his Hands the Word of Life*, amazed at his past Misconduct, labours to vent his Conviction, and suitable Passions of his Soul, (arising from a Sense of God's Goodness, and the Mercies of Christ, and a just Resentment of his perverse Pride and obstinate Incredulity)

lity) with a Heart pierced with Grief and *truly penitent*, with great Eagerness and Difficulty, he cries out, *my Lord, and my God*.

By Faith he perceives the Height and Depth of the divine Love in the Redemption of Mankind, and tastes the Sweetness of it in his own Conviction: he recalls to mind all the gracious Words and Actions of his Lord, what he had said, done, and suffered for the general Salvation of the World, and for himself in particular; all which, like a Flame of pure Fire, purged and purified his Heart from all base and impure Affections, kindled in him the Love of divine Truths, and a due Regard for, and Submission to, the Mysteries of our Religion, and made him, who had before obstinately denied the Resurrection, now expressly confess the Divinity of his Lord, saying, *my Lord, and my God*.

St Thomas was the first of all the Apostles, who expressly and clearly owns and confesses the Divinity of Christ, *thou art Christ*, saith St Peter, *the Son of the living God*; in like manner saith Nathanael to our Lord, *Thou art the Son of God*: but these are but consequential Proofs of his Divinity, such as the Arians own as well as we, and yet deny his Divinity; but to their Confusion, St Thomas styles him, *his Lord, and his God*; which Words are by no subtle nor shuffling artifices to be eluded; because, in the Scripture language,
there

there is no one stiled *my God*, but the true God: and therefore every true Christian will believe and confess him to be Lord and God, whom St Thomas expressly own'd and confess'd to be *his Lord, and his God*.

For the Divinity of Christ is an essential Article of the Christian Faith, without which *our Faith is vain*, and our Religion vain: for if Christ be not God, how could He have made full satisfaction to God's infinite Justice for our Sin; and if no Satisfaction was made, we are yet in our Sins, and under the Sentence of Death.

And further, if Christ be not God, the divine Honour and Worship we pay him, will be down-right Idolatry, which instead of pleasing God, will only provoke him; because He hath declared, that *He will not give his Glory to another*: which yet, if the Scripture be the Word of God, He hath allowed and commanded to be given to Christ; for thus saith He, *let all the Angels of God worship him*.

And therefore if Christ be another, and not the true God, we charge him, *who cannot lie*, with being guilty of a Lie, which being highly blasphemous and absurd, we must therefore conclude with our Apostle, that Christ is no other than the true Lord, and true God: whose Faith in the Divinity of Christ, upon his sensible Conviction of our Lord's Resurrection, animates him to preach that Faith, which

which he had so expressly confest, to the utmost Bounds of the Eastern World; and by the Success of his Apostolick Labours, he in some measure verified that prophetick Expression of the Psalmist, *their Sound is gone out into all Lands, and their Words into the Ends of the World.*

And whereas the rest of the Apostles, after they had received the Gifts of the Spirit, some of them preach'd the Gospel only within the Confines of Judea, scarce any of them went beyond the Bounds of Italie, Egypt, and the lesser Asia; St Thomas, after having converted the Parthians and Medes, the Hyrcanians and Persians to the Christian Faith, pursued his spiritual Conquests much further than the Grecian Heroes spread their Conquests; he advanced into the utmosts Parts of remotest India, preach'd to those People whose very Names were scarce known, and by God's Assistance established among them the Religion of the crucified Jesus, confounded and demolished their Superstitions, overturn'd their Idols, and converted Millions of Souls to the Religion and Faith of Christ.

And after all his good Deeds, he died a Martyr for the Cause and sake of Christ, being assaulted by some armed Infidels, whose Trade he had spoiled by his successful Progress in propagating the Faith of Christ, he

was loaded with Darts and Stones, and at length run through with a Lance.

I proceed now *Lastly* to conclude with some useful Reflections drawn from the forementioned Particulars.

And *First*, while we consider the Weakness and Sinfulness of St Thomas's Incredulity; some Christians, more weak and more curious than wise, may be apt to say, How came it to pass, that Christ should suffer any, much less one whom He had chosen and taken into the Number of the Twelve, for his Companions, Friends and Fellow-labourers in the Word, to be deficient in Faith and Practice, nay to deny the Faith, and in some sense to *be worse than Infidels?* could it become him, who *is holy as God is holy, who is God himself,* and consequently *of purer eyes, than to behold Iniquity,* to permit his Saints to be no less remarkable for their great Follies and Sins, than for their eminent Graces and Vertues? why did not He, who *came into the World on purpose to destroy the Works of the Devil,* make all his Saints perfectly conformable to his own Image, which *was without Spot or Blemish?* would not such Apostles have best adorn'd and recommended their holy Profession to the World?

We may reply, that our Lord was pleased
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to suffer this Mixture of Grace and Infirmities in his chosen Servants, that they might be humble in Heart, and learn not only from his Words, but by their own Experience some of the chief Principles of his Religion: that no one should trust to his own Power and Vertue, as if he were able of himself *to fulfil all Righteousness*; that 'tis necessary for all, who would preserve their Integrity undefil'd, *to watch and pray without ceasing*: hence we are taught, that all our Works must be done, continued, and ended by the Grace of Christ, without whom *we can do nothing*.

Since the Saints of God have had their Infirmities and Sins, let those who stand not be overconfident, like St Peter, lest they fall as he did: let those, who *are strong in the Faith, bear the Infirmities of the weak*; and not please themselves in despising and insulting them for their Weakness: and let those, that are weak, learn from the Example of the strong *to grow in Grace, to be stedfast in the Faith, and abound in the Work of the Lord*.

And since the best of Men have sometimes fallen into gross Sins, and yet upon Repentance have been again restored to favour, let no Sinners despair of the Mercies of God, but let them hope for Pardon upon Repentance; for Christ lovingly invites all penitent Sinners to come unto him, saying, *Come unto me all*

ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will refresh you.

And while we reflect on the Mercy of Christ in appearing to St Thomas after his Resurrection, and shewing him the Marks in his glorified Body, which he received at his Crucifixion, whereby he removed his Incredulity, strengthened his Faith, and proved to him the Greatness of his Love, as well as the Truth of his Resurrection; we must also be convinced, since no matter of Fact ever was, or can be better attested, as well as St Thomas, of the certain Truth of these two great Articles of our Religion, the Resurrection and Divinity of our Lord.

For the one is a necessary Consequent of the other; and therefore, as we can have no Reason to doubt of the Truth of his Resurrection, neither can we have any Reason to doubt of his Divinity; and if we believe the Resurrection and Divinity of Christ, we must believe the Certainty of our own Resurrection; for *Christ is the Resurrection and the Life, the first Fruits of them that Slept; for as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.*

But if we would have our Faith effectual to a joyful Resurrection, we must take care so to live, as that we may *die in the Lord*; our Faith must not be a dead, but a lively
 Faith

Faith in Christ, which, like the Faith of St Thomas after his Conviction, works by Love, and is productive of good Works; and to excite and encourage our Obedience, tho' we have not the same sensible Evidence, as St Thomas had, yet we have a peculiar Benediction pronounced upon our Belief; for Jesus, which said to Thomas, *because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed;* hath also said, *blessed are they, that have not seen, yet have believed.*

SER-

The Christian's Resolution.

S E R M O N XV.

P S A L M CI. 4.

*I will take no wicked thing in hand,
I hate the Sins of Unfaithfulness,
there shall no such cleave unto me.*

HOLY David, the inspired Writer of this Psalm, tho' in some Instances he had been one of the greatest of Sinners, yet was no less eminent for his great Penitence and Piety: by having transgressed the Laws of God, he knew and felt by his own Experience the Guilt, and Shame, and Misery of Sin; and the consequent Horrors of Conscience, the Agonies of his wounded Spirit, and the Terrors of God's Wrath, not only excited in him a Detestation and Abhorrence of all Sin, but
awakened

awakened him to a Sense of Duty, to an ardent Love of Vertue and Piety, and to make a solemn Vow and Profession of Godliness, which is, in some measure, express'd in the Words of my Text, *I will take no wicked thing in hand; I hate the Sins of Unfaithfulness, there shall no such cleave unto me.*

In speaking to these Words, I shall endeavour,

First, to shew that it is the Duty of every Christian to resolve, and say with the Psalmist, *I will take no wicked thing in hand.* And

Secondly, to shew the heinous Guilt of the Sins of Unfaithfulness, that we may be able, through God's Grace, to hate and detest them, and resolve that *no such shall cleave unto us.*

First, I am to shew, that it is the Duty of every Christian to resolve, and say with the Psalmist, *I will take no wicked thing in hand.*

That this is the Duty of every Christian, we learn from these Words of the Apostle*, *let every one, that nameth the Name of Christ, depart from Iniquity.* Our Christian Name is the Badge of our Christian Profession, and therefore should remind us of that most excellent Religion, which we received together with it; and of that solemn Vow, which we

* 2 Tim. 2. 19.

made at our Baptism, that we would not be ashamed to confess the Faith of Christ crucified, and that we would manfully fight under his Banner, against Sin, the World, and the Devil; and continue Christ's faithful Soldiers and Servants unto our Lives end.

It is the bounden Duty therefore of every one, that bears a Christian Name, to live a Christian Life, a Life, not only free from all Evil, but pure and undefiled, suitable to the holy Word and Example of our blessed Lord, who was a Lamb without Spot or Blemish, like unto us in all things, Sin only excepted; He never took any wicked thing in hand, but went about doing good, to the Bodies and Souls of Men.

And such should our Actions be, directed by the Light of his Word, and influenced by his Example; for it behoveth the Servant to be, in his moral Conduct, as his Master: nor will it be sufficient, that we take no wicked thing in hand, we must take no wicked thing in heart; we must not only not do any wicked thing, but we must also not design or desire to do any wicked thing; for God is the Searcher of Men's Hearts, He trieth our Hearts and Reins; so that if we commit no wicked Action, yet if we design or desire to commit it, if we had an Opportunity, we are no less guilty in the sight of God, than if we had committed the outward act of Sin.

Hence

Hence David saith, *if I regard Iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me* *. And Solomon tells us, *that the Thoughts and Prayers of the wicked are an Abomination to the Lord*: and hence our Saviour saith, *that thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy Heart, with all thy Soul, and with all thy Mind*; and likewise tells us, that God will not suffer any Competitor, any Rival in our Affection; for saith He, *no Servant can serve two Masters, for either he will hate the one, or love the other; or hold to the one, and despise the other; ye cannot serve God and Mammon*. And the Obligations we have, *to take no wicked thing in hand, but intirely and with our whole Heart to cleave to that which is good, are very cogent and numerous; of which I shall only briefly insist on these two which follow.*

First, we are obliged thereto from the odious Nature of Sin, and its fatal Consequences: that Sin is odious and detestable is evident; for it was Sin, that defiled the original Purity of our Nature; and defaced the glorious Image of God, in which we were created; and instead thereof impress'd upon the Soul of Man the monstrous Image of that Arch Traytor, who first tempted him to commit it. It was Sin that cast the Devil and his Angels out of Heaven, and our first Parents out of Paradise; that detains the one *in Chains*

* Psal. 66. 18.

of everlasting Darkness, and made the Incorruption of the other to put on Corruption, and their Immortality to put on Mortality.

It is Sin that was and now is the poisonous Cause of all the Pains and Aches of our Bodies, and of all the Trouble and Disquiet of our Souls, which we at any time labour under. By Sin Death, *the King of Terrors*, entred into the World, and all the dismal Train of Diseases that lead unto it: in a word, *Sin is the sting of Death*, which, without timely Repentance, begets *that Worm within us that never dies*, and kindles *that Fire that never will be quenched*: so detestable to Almighty God, that He could not, or rather would not pardon it, without the shedding of the most precious Blood of his only begotten, and well beloved Son; without which we should have had no Advocate with the Father, no Propitiation made for our Sins, and consequently should have been liable to fall into the Hands of the living God, who is a consuming Fire, into the Hands of our great Judge eternal, who, without that plenary Satisfaction made by Christ, would have poured down upon our guilty Heads *the full Vials of his fierce and intolerable Wrath for ever.*

Wherefore, if we consider how odious Sin is in itself, and how fatal in its Consequences; and that how speciously soever it may seem to flatter and court us, by its false Promises
of

of Joy and Pleasure, to its embrace; it certainly leads us out of the right Paths of Peace and Happiness into the *way to Hell, down to the Chambers of eternal Death*: if we consider this, we shall be so far from *taking any wicked thing in hand*, that we should flie from all Sin, as from a Serpent, much more that *old Serpent call'd the Devil, whose sting is Death*.

A *Second Motive and Obligation to take no wicked thing in hand*, is the Beauty of Vertue and Holiness of Life, and the present and future Rewards annexed to it. Vertue and Holiness of Life are no less beautiful and lovely, than Sin is odious and detestable; for *in Righteousness and true Holiness* doth consist the *Image of God*, after which we were created.

God is Holiness and Goodness itself, for whatever is lovely and amiable in the Creatures centers in and proceeds from him; all the Glories of the natural World being but faint Shadows of his infinite Perfections, but *Righteousness and Holiness*, in which Man was made, God himself hath dignified and distinguished with the high Title of his own Image, a Title, which is attributed to the Son of God himself, who is in Glory equal with the Father, and in Majesty coeternal; for He is called *the Brightness of God's Glory, and the express Image of his Person*.

How lovely and beautiful then must Vertue and Holiness needs be, since they are dig-

nified with the same divine Title, with which the Son of God is, who *is the Wisdom and Word of the Father, and in whom all the Fulness of the Godhead dwelt bodily.*

'Tis the Beauty of Vertue and Holiness, that made our first Parents fit for Paradise, and now qualifies the blessed Angels and Saints above to be meet Partakers of the Glories of Heaven.

'Tis the Beauty of Vertue and Holiness, that now consecrates, through the Merits of Christ, the Bodies of all faithful Christians to be *living Temples of the holy Ghost*, the Spirit of Purity and Truth.

'Tis Vertue and Holiness that gives a Man all the true Comfort, Peace, and Pleasure, that he can here enjoy; it creates a Heaven within his Soul, while we are *walking through the Valley of the Shadow of Death*, 'till we safely arrive at that *Haven of Bliss*, where there will not only be *no more Tears, no more Sorrow, nor Crying, nor Pain*, but an eternal Fruition of the Society of Angels, and of the *Spirits of just Men made perfect*, and of the Society of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and of the Beatifick Vision of God the Father, who is the only Centre and Fountain of infinite Happiness.

And these different Consequences of Good and Evil, of Holiness and Sin, are the necessary Attendants and Fruits of their different Natures :

Natures: for in Vertue and Holiness there is a graceful Decency or Decorum, arising from a regular Order and Proportion, that appears in every Act thereof, such as is not only sufficient to attract the Eyes, and excite the Admiration of every Spectator, but also sufficient to please and charm the Heart of every rational Creature, that is adorn'd therewith, and engage, through God's Goodness and gracious Promises in Christ, the Love and Favour of God, who is the great Author and Patron of all Order and Proportion: whereas Sin and Wickedness are Deviations from all Regularity and Order, monstrous Distortions from all Proportion, and consequently the Sinner must be odious to every rational Creature; odious to himself, if he has so much Reason left in him, as to distinguish between Good and Evil; and hateful to God, because all Sin is a Contradiction to the Purity of his Nature and Laws, and consequently He will be sure, without timely Repentance, *plenteously to reward it, with all the fiery Breath of his Displeasure.*

And consequently since *Holiness*, as David saith, *becometh the House of God for ever*, so nothing but what is holy, or intended to be holy, should enter therein; much less *shall any thing, that is unclean or defiled, enter into that sacred House of God which is above, the House not made with hands, eternal in the Heavens; for there shall in no wise enter into it, any*

any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh Abomination, or maketh a lie, but they only which are written in the Lamb's Book of Life.

Wherefore from a due Reflection upon the Beauty of Holiness, and the Deformity of Sin, and the happy Consequences that attend the one, and the direful Consequences that attend the other; we have good Reason to take all possible care, and firmly to resolve, that we will *not take any wicked thing in hand, but to put on, as Job expresses it, Righteousness, that we may be clothed therewith, and that it may be our Robe and Diadem, lest we lose the happy Priviledge of having our Names written in the Book of Life, and be forced to drink of the Wine of the Wrath of God, which is pour'd out without Mixture, into the Cup of his Indignation; and be tormented with Fire and Brimstone, in the Presence of the holy Angels, and in the Presence of the Lamb for ever.*

And if this is the natural Consequence of Sin in general, how much more dreadful will be the Consequence of the Sins of Unfaithfulness? for doth David say, *that he will take no wicked thing in hand?* He yet more warmly expresseth himself against the Sins of Unfaithfulness; *I hate the Sins of Unfaithfulness, there shall no such cleave unto me.*

Which reminds me of my *Second Particular*, which was in a more especial manner to shew
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the horrid Nature and heinous Guilt of the *Sins of Unfaithfulness.*

By the Sins of Unfaithfulness we are without dispute to understand such, as are of the most injurious and destructive, black and devilish Nature, such as are the false Promises we make to one another, more especially the wilful Breach of those solemn Vows and sacramental Engagements we have laid ourselves under to the most high God: such likewise are the treacherous Wounds of a false Friend, and such above all is that Monster of Sin, the Sin of Ingratitude.

And *First*, as to false Promises, and more especially the wilful Breach of those solemn Vows and sacramental Engagements we have laid ourselves under to the most high God.

False Promises are nothing else but Lies, which yet, even those, who are such Pretenders to Honour, that they scorn to take a Lie, without revenging it on him who gives it, tho' at the hazard of Life, are but too often guilty of; and those credulous Fools, who suffer themselves to be deceived thereby, may please themselves with the vain and imaginary Hopes of some future Advantage, yet often find at length the Folly of their Dependance, and that they have nothing left to inherit, but the Shame and misery of a Disappointment.

It was by false Promises and Lies, that Sin
first

first entred into the World, and still continues to maintain its Empire therein; for the Serpent had never perswaded our Mother Eve to taste the forbidden Fruit, had he not fallly assured her first, that *the day she should eat thereof, she should not surely die*; but that *her eyes should be open'd, and she should be as Gods knowing good and evil.*

And by the like Artifice, by a false Promise, he thought to have tempted our blessed Lord, the second Adam to Idolatry; for he shew'd and promised, what was not in his power to give him, *the Kingdoms of the World, and Glory of them, if He would fall down and worship him*: but he received an Answer worthy of our Lord to give that bold Deceiver, *Get thee hence, Satan, for it is written, thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.*

And as the Devil, so doth his genuine Offspring Sin prevail upon Mankind to listen to and embrace it, by false Promises, by the glittering but delusive Shew and Appearance of some gaudy Bait to allure and deceive the unwary Fool: for there is no one ever induced to the Commission of Sin, but by a Perswasion that he shall have and enjoy some Good or Happiness, that he stood in need of. The Devil offers to him, that will enter into his Service, Honour, Profit, or Pleasure; but the Wages with which he rewards his Drudgery,
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are Shame, Remorse, and Damnation: and if the Sinner would compare the Promises and Payments of the Tempter, he will soon be convinced of the Deceitfulness of that Author of Perdition, and of his own Folly in giving ear to him.

But false Promises are not only hurtful to those, to whom they are made, but in many Cases much more hurtful to those that make them; he that is deceived by false Promises, is perhaps disappointed in his Hopes of some trivial Advantage in this Life, but he who makes them, how slightly soever he may at present think of them, will find himself fatally disappointed in his Hopes of Happiness in the next: for the false Promiser is a Liar, and he that is a *Liar, is a Child of him who is the Father of Lies*, and consequently Heir to the Fate and Portion of his Father, (viz.) a State of endless Misery and Perdition.

But, tho' this is the wretched Fate of false Promisers, yet such is the Fate also of all those, who shall presume to be guilty of a Breach of their solemn Vows and sacramental Engagements: for if regardless of the solemn Vow and Covenant made with God at our Baptism, wherein we promised to fight against all Sin under our Saviour's Banner, *the Captain of our Salvation, and to continue his faithful Soldiers and Servants to our Lives end*: if regardless of the sacred Obligations we lay

ourselves under to holiness of Life, as oft as we partake of the holy Mysteries, the dear Pledges of our Saviour's Love, exhibited to us at his holy Table, for then and there we offer and present ourselves, our Souls and Bodies, a reasonable, holy, and lively Sacrifice unto God; I say, if inspite of these Obligations, we shall tamely relapse into, and eagerly indulge ourselves in those Sins which we have so solemnly and frequently renounc'd and abjured; we shall so highly aggravate these *our Sins of Unfaithfulness*, that they will be continually, as St Paul expresses it *more exceeding sinful*.

And since *there is a time when God will be gracious; and a time when he will shut up his loving Kindness in Displeasure*: since there is a time *that his Spirit will not always strive with Man*, but will leave and forsake impenitent and hardned Sinners, we must take care lest, by a continual long Abuse of the Goodness, long Sufferance, and Forbearance of God, we provoke him to withdraw his Holy Spirit from us, and consign us over as a Prey to our own Lusts, and the Devil, who will be sure to hurry us down, like the Gadarene Swine, into the great Deep, the Gulf of Perdition.

Another Instance of the Sins of Unfaithfulness is, the treacherous Wounds of a false Friend: Friendship is a sacred tie of unfeign-
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ed Love and Affection, between those who know the Value of, and are willing to improve that graceful Relation or lovely Quality, and ready to exert and manifest, on all proper Occasions, its genuine Fruits; but 'tis of so delicate a Nature, that it will grow and thrive in no other Soil, beside that wherein the noble Train of all true Vertues flourish.

Hence true Friends are rarely to be found, while false Pretenders to that sacred Name are so numerous, that were it possible to compute and reckon up their Number, it would be a severe Satir upon Mankind: I shall not presume, neither will a Work of this Nature admit of it, to lay before you all the various and subtle Artifices, by which these Men insinuate themselves into the Hearts and Affections of their Brethren, that they may effectually deceive, betray, and ruin them: at present it may be sufficient to observe, that fair Looks and Speeches, and kind Professions of Love and Friendship, are the most usual Preface and Introduction to the greatest Mischief, that can befall Mankind: *Amasa* was first *kiss'd* before he was slain by *Joab*; and *Ammon* kindly entertained before he was basely sacrificed by *Absolom*; by giving ear to, and believing the false Caresses of a fawning Parasite, instead of a true Friend, we admit a Thief, a Traytor, a Judas into our Bosom: Men being generally undone by those, who

should be their chief Succour and Defence.

And if these Pretenders to Friendship, do not proceed so far as to take away and destroy the Life of those they profess to Love, they too often murder their good Name, and Assassinate their Reputation; *Their Words to the Face of their Friends are smoother than Oil, yet behind their Backs they are very Swords.* The best of Men have not been exempt, or secured from the base Treachery of false Friends: our blessed Lord, who was stiled the *Son of David, as well as Son of God, was betray'd by one of the Twelve, whom he had chosen to be his Companions and Friends;* and holy David likewise was a great Sufferer by the treacherous Dealing of such Men, for we find him thus passionately Complaining of the Injuries he had received. *It is not an open Enemy, that hath done me this Dishonour, for then I could have born it: neither was it mine Adversary, that did magnify himself against me, for then peradventure I would have hid myself from him, but it was even thou my Companion, my Guide, and mine own familiar Friend; we took sweet Counsel together, and walked in the House of God as Friends*.*

Whence we learn, what every Man's Experience who has suffered by his Friend, can attest, that the treacherous Wounds of a Friend are much more cutting and intolerable

Psalm 55.

honour

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ble, than the Wounds given by an open Enemy; 'tis not an open Enemy, that hath done me this Dishonour, but mine own familiar Friend; this is the Sting of the Reproach, this makes the holy Prophet thus movingly complain, and perhaps an Eye to this Dishonour, as well as a Sense of its intrinſick Baſeneſs, made him ſay in my Text, *I hate the Sins of Unfaithfulneſs, there ſhall no ſuch cleave unto me.*

This leads me to conſider the *Third* and laſt Inſtance of *the Sins of Unfaithfulneſs*, that Monster of all Sin, the Sin of Ingratitude, a Sin that bears the true *Image and Superſcription of the Devil*, who firſt committed it, and now labours to the utmoſt of his Power and Malice to promote and ſpread it: it conſiſts of the worſt Principles a rational Creature can be poisoned with: for it is founded upon ill Nature and ſignifies an inſenſibility of good Offices done, an unconcernedneſs for the Kindneſs of, and an utter Diſregard for, the Perſon who gives or confers it; and is frequently attended with an Inclination to return and repay good Offices with bad ones; Kindneſs with Contempt, not without Delight and Joy in ſo doing: ſo that whoever heaps his Kindneſſes upon an ungrateful Perſon, is like him who tills and caſts good Seed upon a barren Soil, which inſtead of good Fruit, produceth nothing but ſtinking and
poisonous

poisonous Weeds, which yet are not to be compared to the much more filthy and pernicious Product of an ungrateful Heart, which is always so puffed up with Pride, and soured with ill Nature, that whatever Kindness ungrateful Men receive from others, they look not on it, as a free and undeserved Gift, but only as a just Tribute or Homage due to their own transcendent Merit; and therefore it is no wonder, they should despise and spurn at their Benefactors, and like greedy *Swine turn again and rend those, who cast their Pearls before them.*

Such and so monstrous a Sin, is the Sin of Ingratitude: a Vice censured and condemned by the general Voice of Mankind; a Vice, never mention'd even by any Heathen Writers, but with the blackest marks of Infamy, and Expressions of Detestation: and yet as black a Sin as it is, we are all of us more or less guilty of it, with respect to the great God, the Almighty Creator, and gracious Preserver of the Universe.

God in his Wisdom and Goodness formed us *after his own Image in Righteousness and true Holiness*, and we ungratefully defaced that Image by our Disobedience: and yet He redeem'd us from the threatned Vengeance, *not with corruptible things, as Silver and Gold, but with the most precious Blood of his only begotten Son*: and tho' we daily offend him, yet He

He daily gives us our daily Bread; tho' we continually provoke him by our transgressions, yet He constantly maintains us, and all other living Creatures by the exceeding Riches of his Liberality; and hath promised to receive such vile Ingrates, as we are, for the Sake of Christ, if we sincerely repent, *into everlasting Habitations*: for saith David, *Lord, who shall abide in thy Tabernacle? who shall dwell in thy holy Hill? He that walketh uprightly, and worketh Righteousness, and speaketh the Truth from his Heart; even he that taketh no wicked thing in hand, that hateth the Sins of Unfaithfulness, and will not suffer any such to cleave unto him.*

F I N I S.

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19 Jan 1851

Concurrence of the Court with the Government.

The Court has decided to a great extent
in favour of the Government -
On the 14th inst. the Court
meeting of the above place -

The subject of - 3 fold description
'the subject' which was in the
hands of the Government -

- 1. In the hands of the Government
- 2. In the hands of the Court
- 3) In the hands of the public
- 4) In the hands of the Government

